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THE

WORKS

OF

JOHN OWEN, D.D.

EDITED

BY THOMAS RUSSELL, M.A.

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,

BY WILLIAM ORME.

VOL. XVII.

CONTAINING

THIRTEEN SERMONS PREACHED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS;
TWENTY-FIVE DISCOURSES SUITABLE TO THE LORD'S SUPPER;
THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF APOSTACY;
SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS; AND THE
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SERMONS

PREACHED

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

[FIRST PUBLISHED 1756.]

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To the Reader.

The following discourses were preached by that truly venerable divine in the last century, Dr. John Owen: and in order to be fully satisfied they are genuine, Mrs. Cooke of Stoke-Newington, by this means, informs the reader, that her pious grandfather, Sir John Hartopp, Bart. wrote them in short-hand from the doctor's own mouth, and then took the pains to transcribe them into long-hand; as thinking them worthy of being transmitted down to posteiity. It is from his manuscripts, this collection is now made public.

SERMON I.*

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT, THE BELIEVER'S SUPPORT UNDER DISTRESS.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.—2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

BEFORE I open these words, I shall read the whole context, from the first verse unto the end of the seventh. 'Now these be the last words of David; David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was,' &c.

'Now these be the last words of David;' not absolutely, for you will find, both in the book of Samuel, and also in the book of Chronicles, that David spake many words after these: but these were the last prophetical words of David; or this is the last prophecy of David: and he gives an account in this prophecy of all the faith and experience he had had in the world; and it comprises also the sum and substance of all he had prophesied of; prophesied of as a king, the anointed of the God of Jacob; and prophesied of as a psalmist, as he was 'the sweet psalmist of Israel.'

Now there are three parts of this last prophecy of David:

The first of them concerns the subject of all prophecy and promises, that he had preached about and declared, and that is Christ himself, in the third and fourth verses.

The second of them concerns himself, as he was a type of Christ, ver. 5. And

The third part concerns Satan and the enemies of the church, in opposition unto the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The first part of his prophecy concerns Christ himself; ver. 3, 4. 'The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me; He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' So we have rendered the words; but if you

* This sermon was preached June 27, 1669.

look into the Bible, that [must be] is put into the text, by the misunderstanding of them by interpreters. The words are, מושל באדם צדיק; 'the ruler in or over men, is the just One;' which is Christ himself, who alone is this מושל, this ruler. The word may be two ways interpreted (for to interpret it of a man that ruleth over men, the word will no way bear it, nor the prophecy); the באדם must be, either he that rules in the human nature, is the just One; or he that rules over the human nature, in all saints, 'he is just,' saith he: 'and he rules in' or by 'the fear of God.' As in Isa. xi. 3. it is prophesied of him, 'He shall be of quick understanding in the fear of God;' so here it is prophesied of him, that he shall rule in or by the fear of God; that is the sceptre he shall have in the hearts of men, that is the law he shall put upon the souls of his subjects; he shall rule them neither by outward violence nor force, nor any thing of that nature; but he shall rule them by the fear of God. Ver. 4. declares by sundry comparisons what he shall be: 'Why,' saith he, 'he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.' You know how often these things are applied unto Christ. He iscalled in Malachi, 'the Son of righteousness that ariseth;' chap. iv. 2. He is called 'the day-spring from on high;' Luke i. 78. And he is called 'the bright and morning star;' Rev. xxii. 16. He is both a sun, and morning star, and day-spring. He shall be as the morning that brings light, comfort, joy, refreshment to the church. 'He shall be as a morning without clouds:' there is no darkness in the kingdom of Christ. 'And he shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain;' the same with that in Isaiah, 'He shall spring up as the tender branch out of the earth.' You know the reason of the allusion; when the grass hath been long dried, and there comes a great rain upon it, and clear shining upon that rain, how will the grass spring up? There was to be a great drought upon the church; but Christ comes, and he was as the rain, and as the sun shining upon the rain; then there was a springing up with great glory, and unto great fruitfulness.

I will at present overlook the fifth verse, to which I am to return; and only shew, that the sixth and seventh verses

do contain a prophecy of the enemies of the church; as this does of Christ. 'Belial shall be thrust away as thorns.' We render it, 'the sons of Belial;' but it is only Belial; 'Belial, all of it, the whole name of Belial.' Sometimes the word is taken for wicked men, and sometimes for the prince of wicked men; as here for the devil and all his agents. And he follows on his allusion, 'that they cannot be taken with hands;' Satan and his seed are so full of thorns and prickles against the church, that you can never seize them by the hand to bring them to any order. And the next verse gives caution how well we must be fenced if we touch them. This is the design of the prophecy.

I now return unto that part, which I shall a little more distinctly open unto you, that concerns David himself as he was chosen to be the great type of Christ. Saith he, 'This ruler of men, he shall be as the clear morning without clouds; although my house be not so with God.'

There are two things in the words:

First, A supposition of a great disappointment and surprisal.

Secondly, A relief against, and under that disappointment and surprisal.

First, A great surprisal and disappointment; 'Although my house be not so with God.' I have looked that it should be otherways, saith he, that my house should have a great deal of glory, especially that my house should be upright with God; but I begin to see it will be otherwise. You may observe David's heart was exceedingly set upon his house; therefore, whenever God spake to him concerning his house, it mightily wrought upon him; as 2 Sam. vii. 18, 19. 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' Ver. 25. 'And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.' I am sometimes afraid, that David had (as under the Old Testament they generally had) some carnal apprehensions of these spiritual promises that God gave to David's house, which were principally to bring Christ out of his loins,

that should reign for ever: but David thought all things would come well out of his house also. How stands the case now? Now David sees, that in his house Ammon had defiled Tamar, Absalom had slain Ammon for his sin; and he was cut off in his rebellion; and he foresaw, by a spirit of prophecy, that his whole house was like to perish, and be cut down: and so comes to that now, 'Although my house be not so with God.' So that from hence we may take this observation,

That the best of the saints of God, do oftentimes meet with great surprisals and disappointments in the best of their earthly comforts: their houses are not so with God.

I will give you one or two places for this; 1 Chron. vii. 23. 'Ephraim went in to his wife, and she conceived, and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house.' Ephraim had received a special blessing from God by Jacob, for the multiplying of his house; 'He shall be great, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations;' Gen. lxviii. 19. Now in Ephraim's old age, some of the chief of his sons are killed; 1 Chron. vii. 21, 22. 'There were Zabad, and Shuthelah, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath, that were born in that land, slew, because they came down to take away their cattle; and Ephraim their father mourned many days.' And he called his other child Beriah, because it went evil with his house. It was a great surprise unto him, because he had a promise for his house; though God afterwards retrieved it.

You know how great a surprisal befel Job. See what his thoughts were, Job xxix. 18. After, in all the foregoing part of the chapter, he had related the manifold blessings of God upon him in his prosperity, the uprightness of his own heart, his righteousness in his way, as he declares them to the utmost in the beginning of that chapter, he tells you his thoughts; 'Then said I, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.' He expected, from the blessing of God, long life and peace. You know what surprisal befel him, and disappointment to all his comforts in this world, that never man fell into greater; and he gives you an account how great his surprisal was throughout the next chapter.

The reasons hereof, why it may be thus, are,

First, Because there is no promise of the covenant to the contrary. There is no promise of God secures absolutely unto us our outward comforts, be they of what nature they will, be they in our relations, in our enjoyments, in our persons, of what kind they will, why yet we may have a surprisal befal them in reference to them all; because there is no promise of God to secure the contrary, therefore it may be so.

Secondly, Sometimes it is needful it should be so, though we are apt to think the contrary; and that for these three reasons:

1. To keep continually upon our hearts a due awe of the judgments of God; of the actings of God's providence in a way of judgment; which otherwise we should be apt to think ourselves freed from. David testified that this frame was in himself, Psal. cxix. 120. 'My flesh,' saith he, 'trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.' There ought to be in our hearts, an awe of the judgments of God; 'for our God is a consuming fire;' and if we were secured from surprisals in our own concerns, so fleshly are we, so selfish and carnal, it would be impossible we should keep up a due awe and reverence of the judgments of God. But when these judgments of God may reach our nearest concerns, our lives, and all we enjoy; then doth our flesh tremble in a due manner for fear of him, and we may be afraid of his judgments. A due fear of the judgments of God, is a necessary balance upon the minds of the best of the saints.

2. It is needful to keep us off from security in ourselves. There is such a treachery in our hearts, that we are able to build carnal security upon the spiritual dispensations of God's kindness and love. 'I said I shall never be moved,' saith David. An expression of carnal security. What was the ground? Thou Lord hast made my rock so strong. He built up carnal security upon God's dispensations. It is needful therefore God should sometimes break in upon our concerns, that we may not turn a constant course of his kindness into a sinful security of our own.

3. They are sometimes actually needful to awaken the soul out of such deep sleep of present satisfaction, or love of this world, which nothing else will do. Sometimes we so fall asleep in our own ways, either in our satisfaction, or

projects, and desires, and are so earnest in the pursuit of them, that no ordinary jog will awaken us; it is necessary God should break in upon us in the best of our concerns, and make us put in an 'although' in our course. Although my children live not, and my house be not so with God; although my house be destroyed, &c.

That which we should learn from hence, by way of use, is,

1. Not to put too great a value upon any contentment whatever we have in this world, lest God make us write an 'although' upon it. David seems to have put too great a valuation upon his house, the carnal flourishing of his house; but in his last words, he is forced to come to that, 'Although my house be not so with God;' q. d. what I placed all my hope and expectation upon, that I find is not so with God.

2. Let us be in an expectation of such changes of Providence, that they may not be great surprisals unto us. When we are in peace, let us look for trouble; when we are at liberty, let us look for restraint; and when our children are about us, let us look for the removal of them; and be content to see all our comforts in their winding-sheet every day. It is impossible but our hearts will be too much upon them, unless we keep them in this frame.

The second general observation is this;

That the great reserve and relief for believers, under their surprisals and distresses, lies, in betaking themselves to the covenant of God, or to God in his covenant. Although my house be not so with God; what shall I then do? What will become of me? Yet 'he has made a covenant with me, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: This is all my desire, and all my salvation, although he make not my house to grow.' I say, the great relief, and only reserve of believers in their distresses and surprisals, such as may befal them in a very few days, is to betake themselves to God in his covenant.

I will give you some instances of it, Gen. xv. 1, 2. There God leads us to this I now mentioned. Abraham was in a perplexed condition; God comes to him in the first verse, and renews his covenant with him. 'The word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abraham,

I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' He minds him of the covenant, and bids him not fear. What is the matter that God comes to Abraham, with this, 'Fear not, Abraham?' The next verse discovers it; and Abraham said, 'Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.' He was afraid, that all the travail he had taken, in reference to the promise, would come to nothing; and he must leave it to Eliezer of Damascus. Now God comes to give him relief, in minding him of his covenant.

Jacob also relieved his dying spirit with this, upon the foresight of great troubles in his blessing of Dan, Gen. xlix. 16—18. 'Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.' He alludes to the name Dan, which signifies in Hebrew 'to judge.' When did Dan judge his people? Why in Samson; this is matter of joy to Jacob. But what shall follow? 'Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path; that biteth the horse's heels, so that the rider shall fall backward.' He shall be a serpent and an adder, saith he; that is, idolatry shall be set up in the tribe of Dan, and continue. The first idolatry that was set up in Israel, the work of the serpent, was in the tribe of Dan; Judg. xviii. 30. when the Danites took away the graven image, &c. from Micah, and set it up, and made priests, until the day of the captivity of the land; not the captivity by the Assyrians, but the captivity by the Philistines, when they overcame them, and took away the ark; for then were all those things destroyed at Dan: and afterwards Jeroboam comes and sets up the calf in the same place, and that continued to the last captivity. With what now doth Jacob relieve himself? 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord:' he betakes himself to the covenant, and therewith relieves himself against all the trouble which he foresaw was coming upon his posterity in that tribe, which, upon that account, when the other tribes were sealed in the Revelations, was left out, because idolatry first began and ended in Dan.

David expresseth the same course to the height. Psal. xxxi. 10—15. He describes a very sad condition upon all hands. 'My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my

enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance,' &c. Here is sin and reproach, and contempt, and persecution, and danger of his life, all at once fallen upon him. What doth the man do? Why, in the 14th and 15th ver. he tells you, 'But I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said thou art my God; my times are in thy hand.' He betakes himself to the covenant against all these troubles within doors, and without doors, from sin, the world, wicked men, in reproach, contempt, persecution, that had almost slain him: he hath but this relief, he goes to God, and saith, 'Thou art my God,' thou shalt undertake for me against all these. I am not in the hand of sin, nor in the hand of my enemies; but my times of suffering, my time of life and death are in thy hands. He betakes himself unto God's covenant, and there he finds rest. I might multiply instances.

Take one more, wherein the doctrine is plainly held out; Hab. iii. 17, 18. 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Though my house be not so with God; there is my family gone, the fruits of the earth gone, all is gone; it is no matter, saith the believer, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Every word expresses the covenant of God. By these instances it doth appear, that in the most surprising trouble and disappointments, believers do, as David here doth, betake themselves unto God in covenant.

Why do they so? I will give no reason for it, but what lies in the words.

First, They do it, because of the author of the covenant. They consider who it is that makes it with us: because he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, saith David: there is a great emphasis upon that HE; who is that? Why it is the Rock of Israel, the God of Israel, HE hath made it. It is not a covenant that man hath made with me, nor an angel; but it is a covenant that God hath made with me. And you may observe, that God, whenever he would require our faith or obedience, he doth signally preface his commands and promises with himself. You must know who it is that

commands, and who it is that promises. So in the decalogue, the rule of commands, he prefaceth them with that, 'I am the Lord thy God;' which influences the minds of men unto obedience, and brings them under his authority. And when he made this covenant that David speaks of here, he doth it thus, Gen. xvii. 1. 'I am God Almighty.' This David regards here, when he saith, 'He hath made with me this covenant.' He; who? God Almighty, God All-sufficient; hither I retreat in all my wants and straits. Now, if we make a covenant one with another, we engage all that is in us to make good that covenant; we engage our power and ability, and reputation, and faithfulness. If I have a covenant with any of you, I would reckon upon this covenant, just according unto the esteem I have of your persons, your abilities, reputation, faithfulness; for when you engage in covenant, all you have is engaged. Now God making this covenant, he engages according to his power, goodness, faithfulness; so that we have the reputation of God to secure us in the things of this covenant, his all-sufficiency to assure us of the making good this covenant. So saith the soul, I will retreat unto the covenant, because God hath made it, who is all-sufficient. This makes it a very honourable covenant; it is a covenant made by God; and it makes it a very satisfactory covenant, if all that is in God can give satisfaction unto the soul of a poor creature; and it makes it also a sure covenant, as we shall see afterwards.

This is the first reason why David makes his retreat, in straits and difficulties, unto this covenant, because of the author of it, God himself, who made this covenant.

Secondly, The second reason is taken from the properties of the covenant; what kind of one it is: and they are three. It is an everlasting covenant. It is a covenant that is ordered in all things. And it is a covenant that is sure.

1. It is the great relief of our souls, because it is 'an everlasting covenant.' The things we are troubled about, wherein our comforts consist in this world, are but temporal things; and an everlasting relief against temporal distresses will quite out-balance them.

How is this everlasting? It is everlasting in respect of the beginning of it; it is everlasting in respect of the end of it; and it is everlasting in respect of the matter of it.

(1.) It is everlasting in respect of the beginning of it; it is a covenant that comes from everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love;' what then? 'Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.' This drawing with loving kindness is the covenant here mentioned; and whence doth it proceed? from everlasting love. We had never had the drawing of the covenant, had not that been the spring. I will betake myself unto that covenant, which hath its spring in eternity. This covenant had not its beginning when first I laid hold upon it; but it had its beginning in God's love from all eternity.

(2.) It is everlasting in respect of the end of it: it ceases not until it brings the whole person, soul and body, into everlasting glory. So our Saviour manifests, Matt. xxii. 32. There arose a question whether the dead should arise or no, and so the whole person be brought to God in glory; and the Sadducees came to Christ with a pitiful sophistical question about a woman that had had seven husbands, whose wife she should be in the resurrection? Christ answers them; but how doth he prove that there shall be a resurrection? No otherwise but by the words of the covenant, ver. 32. 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' They live unto God, by virtue of the covenant, unto this day; and, by virtue of the covenant, shall be raised again.

(3.) It is an everlasting covenant upon the account of the matter of it, the things concerning which it is. It is not a covenant about corn and wine and oil; about the growing of our houses, the increase of our families or selves in the world: but it is a covenant about everlasting things; 'things that are not seen;' 2 Cor. iv. 18. Grace is eternal, mercy eternal, spiritual life and joy and comfort are all eternal things. 'This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;' John xvii. 3. Not only eternal glory, but the grace we have here by virtue of the covenant is eternal. It is not about the land of Canaan, thrones and kingdoms; it is not about the prosperity of our families, saith he, but about everlasting things.

Now is there not here great ground for retreat unto this

covenant in all our straits, that hath its rise in everlasting love, its end in everlasting rest, and the matter whereof are all everlasting things. This is the first property of it; and a reason why we ought to make it our relief, because it is an everlasting covenant.

2. The second property of this covenant is, 'That it is ordered in all things.' What is order? Order is the disposition of things into such a way, such a relation one to another, and such a dependance one upon another, as they may all be suited to attain their proper end. This is order. Now, saith he, this covenant is ordered. The truth is, order is the beauty of all things, the glory of all things; and it is but a little, I acknowledge, that I am able to look into, of the order of this covenant, which renders it exceeding beautiful and glorious, and much less that I shall now speak unto you.

I would refer the order of the covenant to these three heads; to its infinitely wise projection; to its solemn confirmation; and to its powerful execution. These three things give this covenant its order. Its infinitely wise projection, in the love and eternal wisdom of the Father; its solemn confirmation, in the blood and sacrifice of the Son; and its powerful execution, in the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of grace. These are the heads of the glorious order of this covenant, that gives it its life, beauty, and glory.

(1.) Its projection was in the wisdom and love of the Father. Whatsoever is spoken concerning the love, grace, and wisdom of the Father, before the world was, was laid out in the projection of this covenant. Take it as it wraps Christ in it, as it brings forth the forgiveness of sin, as it is the centre of grace; and it compriseth the whole effect of divine wisdom, as far as the infinitely holy God ever manifested, or ever will manifest to eternity.

(2.) It had a solemn confirmation in the blood of the Son: hence the blood of Christ is called 'the blood of the covenant.' The covenant was solemnly confirmed in the blood of Christ. It is the design of the apostle, in the tenth chapter of the Hebrews, to prove the solemn confirmation of the new covenant, in the blood of the Son of God, that makes it irrevocable and unchangeable.

(3.) But when all this is done, how shall this covenant be executed? Why, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. He hath undertaken two things. [1.] To assure our souls of all things on the part of God; to reveal the terms of the covenant, and make known unto us the end of God in it. And [2.] to undertake on our parts to give us hearts, that we shall love him, and fear him; to write the terms of the covenant on our part in our souls; so that it shall have an infallible execution. If any thing had been wanting in this order, we could never had benefit by this covenant.

There is an addition of order, in reference to the matter of it, here expressed: as it is ordered, 'so it is ordered in all things:' it is ordered in all the things 'of grace on the part of God;' it is ordered in all the things 'of sin on our part.' (1.) It is ordered in all the things 'of grace on the part of God,' that all grace whatsoever, that is needful for the covenanters, shall be given out unto them. If there were any needful grace that we should come short of, in reference unto the end of this covenant, it would not be ordered in all things. If the covenant had been ordered but in some grace, in quickening grace, and not in persevering grace, we had never come to the end of the covenant; if in pardoning grace, and not renewing grace, we had never come to the end of the covenant; 'for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' But whatsoever grace is needful to bring us to the enjoyment of God, it is ordered in all grace. The first covenant with Adam was ordered in grace, but not in all grace; it was ordered in righteousness, holiness, and innocency, but not ordered in the grace of perseverance; and, failing in that grace, the whole covenant failed: but this covenant is ordered in all things, with reference to believers. (2.) It is ordered in reference unto sin. There was a great deal of glory and beauty in the first covenant; but there was no order taken about sin; that, if any sin came in, the first covenant was gone and broken, and of no use any more. But this covenant hath taken order about sin; that there shall no sin befal believers, but what the grace of the covenant will extend pardon unto. If a believer should fall into any one sin, that would deprive him of the benefit of this covenant, it would not be ordered in all things. There are sins, that, if a believer should fall into,

would break the covenant; but the covenant prevents such falls.

This is another motive to rely upon this covenant, because it is ordered in all things. What could God provide more for poor creatures?

3. The last property of this covenant is, that it is sure. It is 'ordered in all things, and sure.' If it had not been sure, it would not have been a relief unto us. The springs of the security of this covenant are two: (1.) The oath of God; (2.) The intercession of Christ.

God hath confirmed this covenant by his oath; and that gives surety in itself, and security unto us; Heb. vi. 17, 18.

And it is made sure by the interposition of Christ. He 'is made the surety of a better covenant;' Heb. vii. 22. And he lives for ever to make intercession for them that come unto God by him, and so is able to save unto the utmost; ver. 25.

This is what I have to offer from the opening of the words, and the reasons contained in them, why they are the great relief and reserve of believers in all the surprisals, disappointments, and distresses, that may befall them; and we are marvellously unwise, if we do not live in a constant expectation of such surprisals. To say, that we shall die in our nests, and our mountain is so strong that it shall not be moved, this is carnal security.

I will answer one question, and I have done.

How do believers betake themselves to this covenant for relief? Or, what may we do, that we may betake ourselves unto it for our relief in our surprisals and distresses?

I answer, first, The first way is, by faith to get a due and dear valuation of the things of the covenant, above all things we here enjoy in this world. We shall never have relief by it, until we value the things of it as we ought; and those who do so shall never want relief from it.

Secondly, We should seek unto God in covenant, for strength to support us under our surprisals and distresses. When Abraham was going to battle, he took with him Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, who were the men of his covenant; Gen. xiv. 13. When our souls are engaged in battle with our sins, oppositions, and fears, let us take with us the men of our covenant, I mean, take God with us, seek

strength from the covenant, it is the way to support under soul surprisals.

Thirdly and lastly, We must resolve finally to take up our rest in the covenant of God, and not in other things. In Isa. xxx. 15. God brings it to this; 'Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.' God, when he proposes the covenant unto us, doth it, that we should take up our rest and confidence alone in that. 'But ye would not, but said, We will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee.' If we have other reserves, the covenant will never be a stable reserve unto us.

SERMON II.*

ON THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

Although my house, &c.—2 Sam. xxiii: 5.

I DO remember I have spoken in this place formerly from these words; and delivered somewhat concerning the covenant of God, so far as the exposition of the words did lead me.

I shall now add only one consideration, which is taken from the introduction of David's retreat unto, and assertion of, the everlasting covenant in this place; and that is in these words, 'Although my house be not so with God.'

David took a prospect now in his latter days, of all the distresses and calamities that should assuredly come upon his family; and it may be, he had regard unto those great and dreadful breaches that had before been made upon it, in the sins and judgments that ensued upon some of his children. This was enough to work in him a consternation of spirit and trouble of mind; and, in the view and prospect of it, he repairs for his relief unto the covenant of God; 'Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.' What I would observe from it is this:

Under present distresses, and the saddest prospect of future troubles, it is the duty, and wisdom, and privilege of believers, to betake themselves for relief and support unto the covenant of God. Nothing can befall them, no case happen, for which there is no relief provided; and it is the greatest and best relief that can be provided for any case whatsoever.

Having laid down this assertion, the substance of what I shall do at present is, but to confirm it with some Scripture instances, and the practice of believers in former ages.

* This sermon was preached Jan. 1, 1670.

We have one instance in Gen. xxviii. 3, 4. Isaac was sending away his son Jacob unto Padan-aram, to take him a wife; and he might easily know, and did no doubt, what troubles, and distresses, and dangers, would befall Jacob in that great undertaking. And one would somewhat wonder, why so great a man as Isaac was, should send away his son with no better provision than Jacob was sent away with. He gives the account of it, I had nothing but my staff; 'With my staff,' saith he, 'I went over Jordan.' But it seems, that temporal blessings being then a great token and evidence of God's covenant mercies, he would have Jacob work for himself, that he might have experience of God's blessing him in what he did. He should try God by his own experience. And what provision doth he give him, besides his staff, for this great undertaking? It is this, ver. 3, 4. 'God Almighty bless thee, and give thee the blessing of Abraham.' Why does he say, 'God Almighty?' Because that was the name whereby God revealed himself to Abraham, when he entered into covenant with him in Gen. xvii. 1. 'I am the Almighty God.' Isaac calls his son Jacob to renew his covenant interest with God, and to betake himself unto the blessing of the covenant, against that long and hazardous journey he was to go, against the hard, false, oppressive, deceitful dealing he was to meet with, against the dangers he was to encounter. He gives him the covenant for his security. And Jacob was not wanting to take the same course himself, Gen. xxxii. 9. and so onward: he was in as great a distress, and under as just a fear, as ever man was in this world, or could be in; and so he expresses his fear unto God, ver. 11. 'Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother, with the children.' He feared the universal destruction of himself and family, and so the failing of the promise he had received, and which he had pursued through so many difficulties and dangers. What course now doth Jacob take? Why, he appeals to the covenant, ver. 9. 'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac;' which was the plea whereby they did plead the covenant that God entered solemnly into with them. Two things, it is evident, Jacob pleaded in this very great distress: one was the co-

venant that God made with Abraham; that is, the covenant of grace; for so he doth, ver. 9. He refers unto what blessing Isaac gave him when he went away; God Almighty bless thee, and give thee the blessing of Abraham. And, secondly, he appeals unto that particular covenant engagement, which he himself had made unto God; for in chap. xxviii. 13. God comes unto him, and renews his covenant. 'And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac;' and thereupon Jacob renews his covenant in particular with God, ver. 21. 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way, then shall the Lord be my God.' These two things doth Jacob in his great distress, he minds the covenant in general, and the particular covenant engagement God had brought him into; for so he pleads, 'Thou saidst unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.' Where did he say so? He said so in chap. xxxi. 13. When Jacob made his covenant with God, he pleaded these two things, in the greatest distress that could befall him in this world.

Shall I give you one instance more? David gives it us in his own person, Psal. xxxi. 9—13. He makes as sad a complaint of such a complication of distresses upon him, as there is any where extant in the whole book of the Psalms. 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, yea my soul, and my belly,' &c. I could easily manifest, what a confluence of evil this holy man was now under; within, iniquities prevailed, and the fear of them; and without, friends forsook him, and enemies took counsel to take away his life. Whereunto doth he retreat? What doth he seek for relief in? What is the contrivance of this man of wisdom and courage, and interest in the world? See ver. 14. 'But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God;' and this put an end to all his difficulties. But this matter I have hinted in a former sermon.

It were an easy thing to multiply instances, both of particular persons, and the church in general, who were taught this wisdom of God, and knew this to be their duty, To let go all other vain contrivances, and to take up their relief

only in the covenant of God; as David doth here in the text.

Let us see a little more into the nature of it, that it may give us encouragement to our duty. And,

First, When a man betakes himself for relief unto God's covenant, 'he doth put God in mind of it,' wherewith he is greatly delighted; because therein he hath wrapped up his greatest glory in this world; and God is greatly delighted to be put in remembrance of that wherein he hath wrapped up the glory of his grace. It was Jacob's argument, when he wrestled with God, and prevailed; as signal an instance of the work of faith, and the deportment of a believer under great distresses, as the whole Old Testament affords us; and is given as an example to confirm our faith, Hos. xii. 4. 'Thou saidst thou wouldst surely do me good;' Gen. xxxii. 12. He put God in mind of what he had said to him, when he made the covenant with him; and you know what a glorious issue it had. Jacob could not have done any thing more pleasing and acceptable unto God, than to put him in remembrance of what, out of his goodness, grace and bounty, he had promised; for he professes that 'he was not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which God had shewed unto him;' I plead not any thing, says he, of my own deservings; but, 'Lord, didst thou not say thou wouldst do me good?' God is greatly pleased with being remembered of the effects of his own grace, and wherein he hath wrapped so much of his own glory.

Secondly, As God would have us mind him of the covenant, 'so his remembrance of it, is still laid at the bottom of all the good he doth unto us,' and of all the dispensations of his love and grace.

God made a covenant with Noah, and with all the world in him; wherein he gave the preservation of the world, from a universal destruction, in covenant unto his saints; for the world is at this day, and to the last will be preserved upon this account, that God hath given the preservation of it in covenant unto Noah, and to them that succeed in the faith of Noah. But how comes it to pass, that God will destroy this world no more with a flood, when he had made this covenant? Saith God, 'I will set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of the covenant; and the bow shall be

in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature.' It is spoken after the manner of men, when they have made an engagement, that they will do such a thing; it may be out of their mind, but if you remind them of it by a token, then they will recover their memory, and do according to their engagement. Now, saith God, I will take it upon myself, to remind myself. And when he remembers the covenant, what will he do? Then I will restrain my wrath and indignation, and I will destroy the earth no more. The withholding of troubles, judgments, and desolations, is laid in God's remembering of the covenant. It is all comprised together, Luke i. 72—75. 'To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' All deliverance from our enemies, of whom we are afraid; all communication of grace and of spiritual strength, to enable us to serve God in holiness and righteousness; it all springs from this, God's remembering of his covenant.

Now he that retreats to God in his distresses, reminds God of his covenant; 'Thou saidst thou wouldst do me good.' And the bringing forth of God's word of promise, is as good a token as his own bringing forth the bow in the cloud. And this is the foundation of all the good he doth for us or in us.

Thirdly, 'What is there in the covenant, that God doth thus remember,' that will give us relief in times of distress, and in our prospect of future calamities that may befall us? and what are we to have regard unto, that may give us that relief? I answer,

1. God himself is in it; there lies the nature of it. When he came to make it with Abraham, 'I am God Almighty,' saith he: He doth not speak a word there what he will do for Abraham, but 'I am God Almighty;' he leaves it there, then requires his obedience, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect.' Abraham shall rest in this, that God himself is in the covenant; for the rest that is to be done, trust me with it, I take that upon myself. And, saith he, Hos. ii. 23.

'They shall be my people, and I will be their God.' Here we have the eternal fountain and spring of all relief (if our houses are not so as we could desire), that is, God himself. So that, if there be any thing in the nature of God, in his infinite, eternal excellency, that is suited to the relief of a soul, he hath made his covenant sufficient to convey it unto the souls of believers. And what we come short of, is not for want of fulness in the fountain, and ability in the means of conveyance, but for want of faith to receive it.

2. Christ is in the covenant, Gal. iii. 16. 'To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.' In all the promises made to Abraham, Christ as the seed, was intended, so that Christ shall be theirs with all his benefits. This is also in it. And,

3. All the promises of God are in it, which are in unspeakable variety, as effects of infinite wisdom, suited unto the wants that may befall us in this world. So, as that it is utterly impossible that any believer should ever want any thing, that there is not grace in one promise or other suited unto that want. They all belong unto the covenant. Consider the fountain of it, God himself, who is inexhaustible in stores of help and grace: consider the means of procuring; Christ is in it, who hath purchased for us every thing that is needful; and, lastly, consider the means of communication, which are the promises; so that there is nothing wanting for our relief.

Fourthly, If we would have relief in the covenant, let us consider our own entering into covenant with God, and what is comprised therein. Whosoever entereth into covenant with God, he doth accept God to be his God, for all the ends of the covenant whatever. And he that will retreat for relief unto the covenant, must stand to the covenant. And in this acceptance of God to be our God, there are two things:

1. An absolute renunciation of all expectation of any help for the ends of the covenant, from any other thing whatsoever. For what we look for therein (and therein we look for all), there is to be an express renunciation of any expectation from any thing else to that end and purpose. So do they in Jer. iii. 22, 23. 'Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped

for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.' Things are called hills and mountains, because they make a great and goodly appearance of help and relief. The people here are directed to take up their relief in God alone; 'We come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.' What is required hereunto? Why, an absolute renunciation of all help and assistance from the hills, and from the mountains. And one great reason why we are so slow in drinking in that relief, which God is so willing to give out unto us, is, because we are still casting our eyes towards the hills and mountains, looking this way and that way for something that may give us relief; but it is in vain, there is an absolute renunciation of all other help included in accepting of God to be our God in covenant. So Hos. xiv. 3. 'Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.' And if there hath not been a solemn renunciation of other helps in our covenant with God, it is no wonder we do so halt as we do, between God and the world, when we come to our straits and distresses. Where this hath been firm in the soul, and he is nakedly cast upon God as a poor fatherless creature, to find mercy in him; and goes to him and saith, Truly thou art our God, in thee is our help; that soul shall not fail of such supplies as shall be needful for him in his condition. This leads to observe,

The next thing to be done is, 'an actual resting upon God,' or casting of ourselves upon him for all things.

Where these things are not, we do, in speaking of the covenant, but flatter God with our lips. There is no solemn covenant between God and us. This God required when he came to Abraham; saith he, 'Fear not, Abraham:' Why so? 'I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward.' Why so? Consider the condition of Abraham, and you will see what reason there was for God to give himself that title in this renewing of the covenant unto him. Abraham was in a wandering condition up and down the world, exposed to dangers, injuries, distresses from every hand. He knew not whether there was the fear of God in any place where he came. 'Fear not, Abraham,' saith God, 'I am thy shield,' trust me for thy protection, trust me for thy deliverance out

of danger. But, saith Abraham, I am engaged in a long and wearisome pilgrimage; 'and now, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless.' Men will labour and take pains for their posterity in an ordinary way. Abraham had not only that thought about his posterity, but also about the promise: Why, saith God, 'I am thy reward;' a sufficient reward unto thee for all thy labour and travail, and sufferings. We would be glad to be freed from danger, freed from trouble in our pilgrimage, which encompasses us on every hand: and there is none of us, but would be glad to see some reward, some prosperity of the church of God in this world, and deliverance from trouble. But if we truly enter into covenant with God, we are to take him as a full satisfaction for all our dangers, for all our labours, though we see not the fruit of them in this world. He that enters into covenant with God, takes God for his protection and reward, and him alone. Had we but the power of these things in our hearts, it would alleviate all our troubles, and ease us under all our dangers, fears, distresses, and disappointments.

Fifthly, If we would find relief in the covenant, we may do well to consider upon what terms we did enter into covenant with God. Now entering into covenant with God, is twofold;

1. It may be explicit, as when it comes to these express terms mentioned, Hos. iii. 3. 'Thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.' Some persons have laid the foundation of their obedience in direct express covenanting with God. And,

2. Sometimes it is implicitly wrought; as where God in the conversion of men, deals with them as he saith he will do with the church, Hos. ii. 14. 'I will allure them into the wilderness, and there speak comfortably unto them.' God by little and little, various workings and reasonings of the Spirit by the word upon the heart and affections, doth allure them from their former state, draws them aside to himself in the wilderness, there treats with them, and by little and little speaks comfort unto them; and so at length makes up the marriage covenant, which he mentions in ver. 19, and 'betroths them to himself for ever.' So it is with many: God hath, as to this covenant with himself, allured them, though

it would be useful, if not needful, for such persons, solemnly and expressly upon some occasions to renew their covenant with God as Jacob did.

Now as to those whom God hath thus taken into covenant, whom he hath thus allured, there are always these two things upon their minds, in their thus entering into covenant with God, which we may do well to consider and remember.

(1.) That they do surely accept God in Christ for himself, and make no conditions about peace and prosperity, and freedom from trouble in this world. Naaman made a reserve, that he would bow in the house of Rimmon, and that spoiled his whole covenant. Whoever hath in sincerity thus engaged in covenant with God, his own soul will bear him witness that he made no condition, had no reserve. And the proffer of any one condition to God or Christ whatever, is enough to ruin the whole marriage contract he tenders to us. Now for a man to faint and sink under any thing that befalls him, let him retreat unto the covenant, and inquire there whether ever he made a condition against it, against imprisonment, banishment, poverty, losses, troubles, distresses: did he say, if God would keep him from all these? God made no such condition with him. What God hath actually engaged before in promise, that we may plead with him as a condition, for Jacob did so; 'If thou wilt be with me, and bless me.' God had given him that promise; 'Thou saidst, I will deal well with thee, and I will surely do thee good;' but not else.

(2.) You may remember, with what affections you engaged unto God. It is a marriage covenant; Jer. iii. 14. 'I am married unto you,' saith God; and Isa. liv. 5. 'Thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name.' And there is nothing more eminent in the marriage covenant, than a mighty prevalency of affection. I should much doubt whether I had really entered into covenant with God, if I had never found any thing of entire marriage affections towards God in Christ for himself. That soul that can under his distresses repair to some sense and experience of the prevalency of his affections in it formerly, it will relieve him against all his troubles, and only make him cry out for such affections unto God again: that will fully satisfy, when they are drawn out unto him. The remembrance and call-

ing over of these things, will greatly relieve and support a soul, whatever its distress or perplexity may be.

Sixthly, I have one consideration more, which is the last I shall insist upon; and that is, to consider in this covenant, whereunto I make my retreat, 'Who it is that hath made it with me.' And therein I would consider two things; the one whereof will have the endearment of admiration, and the other will have full and plenary satisfaction.

Why, it is God that hath made this covenant with us: he hath made with me, saith David. If a great, a mighty king and prince of the earth, had made a covenant with us, and confirmed it solemnly by his oath to take care of all our concerns; so carnal, and so fleshly are we, that it would give us great relief against imminent danger and hazards. But who hath made this covenant with us? God hath made it; and two things are considerable in this: 1. His condescension in entering into this covenant; 2. His sufficiency to satisfy us in it.

1. His condescension. And we may consider the condescension of God, upon the account of his greatness, upon the account of his holiness, and upon the account of his self-sufficiency.

(1.) Upon the account of his greatness. You may observe in sundry places, that where God doth mention his covenant, or the fruits of his covenant, he doth oftentimes mention his greatness with it. So, Isa. lvii. 15. 'Thus saith the Lord, the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity; I will dwell with him also' (which is God's covenant) 'that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' The high and lofty One will condescend to dwell with the poor and humble. And Stephen, Acts vii. 2. mentioning God's calling of Abraham, saith he, 'The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham.' That the high and the lofty One, the great and the glorious God, should enter into this covenant with poor dust and ashes, worms of the earth as we are! the Lord help us to understand it. Condescension is endearing and satisfying: we find it so among men. If a man that is great in the world, doth but condescend to respect and be familiar towards them that are poor, that are beggars, it is looked upon as a very great matter, and doth wonderfully engage such persons to them that thus condescend. But let that

distance be what it will that is between the highest and greatest king and the meanest beggar, they are men still; and, upon some accounts, the meanest may be the better. But there is an infinite distance between God and us, between the high and the lofty One, the glorious God, the possessor of heaven and earth, and poor dust and ashes: that he should take us into covenant, and engage himself by oath for the accomplishment of it; and should accept of our answering of his covenant, and engaging of our hearts unto him that he should be ours, and that we should be his. No heart can fully conceive this condescension. But

(2.) There is greater condescension yet; and that is, his great condescension with respect unto his holiness. It is a great condescension of God, upon the account of his greatness, to enter into covenant with man; but it is a greater condescension for the holy God to enter into covenant with sinful man: and therefore, though there was great grace, and great excellency in the first covenant, wherein the Creator entered into covenant with the creature; yet the second covenant is far more excellent and mysterious, where the holy God entered into covenant with sinners. In the first covenant there was no need of a mediator; but when a covenant is made between the holy God and sinners, there comes in the person of Jesus Christ, which shews infinite condescension on the part of God.

(3.) Consider his condescension upon the account of his self-sufficiency. Though God be thus great, and though he be thus holy, yet may he not, however, have some use of poor man? May he not have some need of his service? As the greatest men upon earth have some need of their subjects and tenants, they have a revenue out of them: but God had no need of us at all, or of that service we tender him by virtue of this covenant. Psal. xvi. 2. 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord;' what then will he do for God: 'my goodness extends not unto thee.' It is true, thou art my God in a way of mere sovereign grace; but what I can do reaches not unto thee. So he saith, Job xxxv. 6—8. 'If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a

man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the Son of man.' God receives no profit, no advantage by it; so that it is an infinite condescension in God with respect to his self-sufficiency, and that upon two accounts; [1.] Upon the absolute, eternal self-sufficiency of his own nature. All the creatures in the world add nothing to God's state of blessedness. He made them, not that he might have advantage by them; but that he might communicate of his own goodness unto them. He was no less infinitely eternally blessed before a creature was made to contemplate his glory, than he is now. [2.] Suppose all those he takes into covenant should fail him, 'he can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham;' he can bring up another people that may serve him to his praise and glory.

That is the first thing that will greatly refresh our souls under distresses, if we consider God's gracious condescension in taking us into covenant with him, upon the account of his greatness, his holiness, and his self-sufficiency; and it is an endearing condescension. 'What am I,' said Elizabeth, 'that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?' Much more may we say, what are we, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ should thus come unto us, to take us into covenant with himself?

2. It will be a relief, if we consider God's all-sufficiency to 'satisfy our souls' in every state and condition. This he made the ground of his covenant with Abraham; 'I am God Almighty.' And, if there be any want in God, we are freed from the terms of the covenant; that I may speak it to aggravate the sin of our instability, and the not taking up full satisfaction in him. 'But is it so?' saith God, 'Have I been a wilderness unto you, or a barren heath? As waters that fail?' Have we, at any time, in our own experience, failed of any thing all our life long hitherto? Have we wanted any thing? Our want arises because we will not admit, we will not receive; or we long after other things which God is not pleased we should have. There is in God an all-sufficiency of grace and mercy to pardon us; there is an all-sufficiency of spiritual strength to support us and carry us through all our difficulties; there is an all-sufficiency of goodness and beauty to satisfy us; and there is an all-sufficiency of power and glory to reward us.

(1.) There is in God, to meet with our wants, an all-sufficiency of grace and 'mercy to pardon us:' Tit. iii. 3, 4. The apostle having made a description of what we were before our conversion to God, and notwithstanding all the paint we put upon ourselves, has given us a character as black as hell; 'We ourselves were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.' How were we delivered? 'The kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared.' God, who is rich in grace, of his mercy wherewith he loved us in Christ, notwithstanding that cursed condition of ours, pardons, sanctifies, and saves us. There is an all-sufficiency of grace and mercy in God, I say, to pardon us. Where is there a believer that cannot say, he has found God all-sufficient to pardon sin?

(2.) There is an all-sufficiency of spiritual 'strength in God to support us.' Here lies our great strait and perplexity, the experience of our own weakness, of the unspeakable variety of temptations wherewith we are exercised, of oppositions that we meet withal, especially in such a time wherein the floods lift up their voice and rage. Who shall be able to go through all these difficulties? these remaining trials, temptations, troubles of our pilgrimage? How shall we be able to withstand them? I know not how it is with others, but it is a wonder to myself, that my soul is alive, considering what is come already: But 'there is the residue of the Spirit with God.' He tells you, Isa. xl. 28. to the end, that he will not faint in this work of giving out grace and spiritual strength; 'He will give power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he will increase strength.' He is able to carry us through all, and cause us to sing, because of his majesty, in the very fire.

(3.) There is an all-sufficiency of goodness and beauty in God to satisfy our souls. We are scattering away our affections 'upon every high hill, and under every green tree, Jer. ii. 20. looking for, and seeking after satisfaction from perishing things; but we find them all vanity and vexation of spirit: they will appear so unto us. But, 'How great is his goodness? How great is his beauty?' Zech. ix. 17. O the excellency and desirableness of God to satisfy and

fill all the affections of our hearts in every state and condition!

(4.) And lastly, there is an all-sufficiency in God 'to reward us' when we shall be here no more. The lion lies at the door, death is ready to seize upon us. Let our condition be what it will, we are entering into eternity: but God hath engaged himself by covenant to be our God; he hath promised to carry us through the dark shade, and to crown our souls with glory. 'Be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

SERMON III.*

Wherefore, he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.—Eph. iv. 8.

THE design of these words is to shew, that the gift of the ministry, and of ministers, of the office, and persons to discharge that office, is an eminent fruit of the exaltation of Christ, and a great expression and pledge of his care and love towards his church; and that is my doctrine, which I shall speak unto from them.

First, It is a gift, Αὐτὸς ἔδοκη, ver. 11. 'He himself gave.' The foundation of the ministry is in the gift of Christ. Let me answer that question which he put once to the Pharisees, 'The baptism of John, is it from heaven? or is it of men?' In like manner, I say, the ministry, is it from heaven? or is it of men? The answer is, in the text, He gave; it is the gift of Christ. It is also the great promise, that he would do so; Jer. iii. 15. 'I will give you pastors according to my own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.' When shall that be? 'When,' saith he, 'I shall take you, one of a city and two of a family, and bring you to Zion,' as it is said in ver. 14. Or, when I shall call you by the gospel, then I will give you pastors according to my own heart. And that this is a promise of the gospel, and so intended in that place of Jeremiah, you may see, chap. xxiii. 4. where the promise is repeated, 'I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them.' Ver. 5. 'When I raise unto David a righteous branch, a king that shall reign and prosper.' It is the great promise that, under the gospel, Christ would give ministers to his church.

It may be said, we know how Christ gave apostles when he was on earth; he called them, chose them, sent them; but how doth Christ now continue to give ministers to his church? That we may not claim an interest in a gift, and a privilege that we have no right unto—I say, by four ways

* This sermon was preached at the ordination of a minister, Jan. 23, 1673.

or means doth Christ continue to give ministers in all ages unto his church. The church is to consider them as that which is the bottom and foundation of the duties they perform, and of the work undertaken this day.

First, He doth it 'by the standing law, ordinance, and institution of the gospel,' whereby he hath appointed this office of the ministry in the church, as the great Mediator of it. All the saints in the world, all the disciples of Christ, neither could nor ought (whatever necessity they could have thought they had seen of it, whatever congruity from the light of nature) to have appointed teachers nor officers among them, neither could it ever have been blessed unto their advantage, if Christ had not, by a standing ordinance and law, appointed such an office: and if that law comes to an end, if its obligation ceases, the work of the ministry, and the whole office of it must cease also: but if this ordinance be, 'as the ordinances of heaven,' of the sun, moon, and stars, that change not, it shall never be altered in this world. It is plain then, the neglect of the work and office of the ministry is so far a rebellion against the authority of Christ. 'All power,' saith he, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. 'is given to me in heaven and earth; therefore go preach the gospel, and I am with you to the end of the world.' He is exalted, and he gives some to be pastors and some to be teachers, until all the elect of God are brought unto the unity of the faith, and unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Secondly, The second thing he doth, is 'the giving spiritual gifts' unto men, whereby they may be enabled unto the discharge of the office of the ministry, as to the edification of the church, in all the ends of it. Gifts make no man a minister; but all the world cannot make a minister of Christ, without gifts. If the Lord Jesus Christ should cease to give out spiritual gifts unto men for the work of the ministry, he need do no more to take away the ministry itself; it must cease also: and it is the very way the ministry ceases in apostatising churches, Christ no more giving out unto them of the gifts of his Spirit; and all their outward forms and order, which they can continue, are of no signification in his sight.

Thirdly, Christ doth it by giving power unto his church

to call persons to that office, by him appointed and prepared by the gifts he bestows. And you may observe three things concerning this power.

1. That this power in the church is not despotical, lordly, and absolute. It is not from any authority of their own; but it consists in an absolute compliance with the command of Christ; it is but the doing what Christ hath commanded, and that gives virtue, efficacy, and power unto it. Look not upon us as though, by our power and our virtue, may the church say, we have made this man a minister this day. It is in the name and authority of Jesus Christ alone by which we act; in obedience unto that, he is so constituted and appointed.

2. There is no power in any church to choose any one whom Christ hath not chosen before; i. e. No church can make a man formally a minister, that Christ hath not made so materially; if I may so say. If Christ hath not preinstructed and prefurnished him with gifts, it is not in the power of the church to choose or call him. And where these two things are, where the law of Christ is the foundation, and where the gifts of Christ are the preparative; thereupon the church calls, and persons are constituted elders by the Holy Ghost, and overseers of the flock, as in Acts xx. 28. Because he gave the law of the office, and because he gave these gifts to the officers, therefore are they constituted by the Holy Ghost. They were the ordinary elders of the church of Ephesus, to whom the apostle gives in charge 'to feed the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.'

3. The way whereby the church doth call or constitute any person into this office thus appointed, is by giving themselves up unto him in the Lord, which they testify by their solemn choice and election by suffrage: the way, I say, is by submitting themselves unto him in the Lord, witnessing it by their solemn suffrage in the choice of him. 2 Cor. viii. 5. 'And this they did,' saith the apostle, viz. the saints of Macedonia, 'not as we hoped,' much beyond our expectation, 'but first gave their ownselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' It is the great work you have to do, let me tell you, of this church, in your calling of an officer, to give up yourselves unto him by the will of God, to be led, guided, in-

structed, directed, to have the work of the ministry fulfilled among you to your edification: and this submission, wherein (as I could evince by arguments sufficient) the essence of the call doth consist, is to be testified by suffrage or by choice. When God ordered the Levites to be set apart unto the service of the tabernacle, in the name, and on the behalf of the whole congregation; to shew what weight he laid upon the consent and suffrage of the people, he caused all the people to come together, and to lay their hands upon them; Num. viii. 9, 10. 'Thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together:' all the church. 'And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:' viz. to testify their consent in their solemn dedication to the Lord, to minister in the tabernacle in their name, and on their behalf.

We have, in the New Testament, thirteen times mentioned the setting apart of ministers unto their office; some of which I shall mention. The first account is in Acts i. 15. unto the end. It was was while they were praying, upon a sermon of Peter's, which he preached unto them, that they went about their work; 'for every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer.' There was an apostle to be called. But here God was to have a peculiar, sovereign interposition, and to give a special manifestation of his own divine choice; so that it could not be absolutely left unto the choice of the church. Yet thus far they went, that, antecedently unto God's choice, 'they appointed two;' v. 23. This was the first church act that ever was performed in the New Testament. There was in it a pattern to be laid for after times and ages. Let the church proceed as far as possible with a reserve to the sovereignty of God. 'They appointed two;' so far, I say, they went: and then God took his man. But still, to preserve the liberty of the church herein, it is added, when God had taken him, συγκατεψηφίσθη, he was, by common suffrage, as the word signifies, reckoned among the apostles. There was antecedently allowed them the choice of two; and consequently, their common suffrage, that he should be among the number of the apostles. The next call we have is in Acts vi. which is the 'call of deacons;' where

the whole matter is, by the assembly of apostles, referred unto the body of the church. One would wonder how such a forgetfulness should befal a world of men who call themselves Christians, to do all these things without them, as though the church had no concern in them, when the whole body of the apostles, being assembled together (who had all the power and authority in their hands, as Christ had committed unto any of the children of men), direct the church to use what power Christ had intrusted them with. 'Brethren,' say they, 'look out from among yourselves;' ver. 3. 'And the saying pleased the whole multitude;' ver. 5. 'And they chose Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost;' and so the rest, who were afterward set apart. If all the apostles were upon the earth together, where there was in truth a church of Christ, called according to his mind, they would not undertake to deprive the church of their liberty, which any man now, who is far from an apostle, you know, will take upon him at any time. A third Scripture, where it is mentioned, is Acts xiv. 23. 'And when they had ordained them elders in every church,' &c. I confess, I am not free to manage the argument now from this place, although it is the most cogent; because it depends merely and purely upon the signification of the original word. Only this I would recommend to you, that before interest had guided men in what they had to do, all the translations, that were extant in English, did read this text, 'And ordained them elders by election,' as the word doth signify: so you will find it in your old translations. But since, it was left out to serve a turn. We may freely say, there is no one instance to be found in the whole New Testament, concerning the practical part of communicating an office unto any person, but it is peculiarly also declared, that it was done by the election of the multitude, or the body of the church.

This is the third way, whereby Christ continues to give these gifts unto men.

Fourthly, The fourth way is, by his law, ordinance, and institution, that the person so qualified, and so called, should be solemnly 'set apart by fasting and prayer.' So you have it, Acts xiv. 23. 'And when they had ordained them elders,' chose them elders 'in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord.' And upon the

like occasion, when Paul and Barnabas were to be separated anew unto a special work, it is said, Acts xiii. 3. 'When they had fasted and prayed, they sent them forth.'

These then are the four ways to answer that great inquiry, how doth Christ continue to give ministers unto the church? He doth it by his law, constituting the office, the law in the gospel, which is an everlasting ordinance. He doth it by his Spirit, communicating gifts unto persons. He doth it by his church calling of them, and by a submission to them according to the will of God, and testifying that submission by their suffrage. He doth it by his ordinance of solemnly setting them apart with fasting and prayer. And these, my brethren, are things that we are come together about this day. This is our faith, this is our warrant; wherein we do not pursue our own imaginations, nor the inventions of other men, nor follow cunningly devised fables; but from first to last have our warrant from Christ. The good Lord pardon us, wherein we come short of the preparation of the sanctuary, and accept us according to the desire of our hearts, to do the service of his house and tabernacle.

I will but speak a word or two of use to this part, and then we will proceed to that work which is your part this day; whereunto, if God give strength, I shall add some farther instructions, and then desire the help of our brethren present to carry it on.

First then, if there be any office, let it be under never so glorious, or so specious a title, if Christ hath not appointed that office by virtue of gospel ordinance and institution, there is a nullity in it; it is no gift of Christ, let who will bear it, and discharge it; with what formality soever they come unto it, popes and cardinals, metropolitans and diocesans, there is a nullity in the office, by reason there is no law, ordinance, or institution of Christ appointing of it. All the outward order and solemnity in the world, and all the holiness of persons, when engaging in such an office, cannot give it a right and title; because it wants the law of Christ for its foundation.

And where the office itself is appointed by Christ, if there be no communication of gifts unto the person; there is not a nullity in the office, absolutely; but there is a nullity as to the person. It is essential to the office, that Christ choose

the person by communicating of gifts unto him. Where this is not, I will not say, that there must always (for things are greatly varied with circumstances) be a nullity in all administrations; but there is a nullity in the person ministering before Christ.

Secondly, Let the church consider aright, how they are to receive, and what apprehensions they have of a minister that comes to them according to this law, order, and institution of Christ, which I have unfolded to you. He is a gift of Christ. It requires wisdom and prudence in a man to receive a gift: consider what he doth, he takes an obligation upon himself; much more to receive a gift from a prince. But to receive a gift, and so great a gift from Christ! Certainly there ought to be some particular preparation of our hearts for it. How great a mercy, how great a gift this is, I could easily demonstrate.

There are two things that I will but name, 1. Valuation and thankfulness. 2. Improvement. As soon as we are a church of God, these things are expected of us. When we receive so great a gift from Christ, he expects that it be valued, that it be thankfully received, and that it be duly improved.

And on the part of him, or of any of us, who are called to the ministry, undoubtedly it is incumbent upon us, so to behave ourselves, and so to approve ourselves, as that we may own ourselves to be a gift of Christ unto the church, and be owned by the church, as a gift of Christ. I do not know, for my own part, a more trembling thought that a minister hath, or can have in the consideration of his office, work, and duty, whereunto he is called, than this one; How shall I approve myself so, as to be looked on as a gift from Christ, given unto the church?

There are three things that are required in every one, who may be esteemed to be a gift given by Christ unto the church. 1. An imitation of Christ. 2. A representation of him. And, 3. Zeal for him.

1. 'An imitation of Christ,' as the great Shepherd of the flock, in meekness, in care, in love, in tenderness towards the whole flock. So Christ is described, Isa. xl. 11. 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall

gently lead those who are with young:' here is the great pattern, here is an example for all who are shepherds of the flock under Christ (who intend to give an account with comfort unto the great Shepherd of the sheep, when he shall appear at the last day) in meekness and condescension, giving out help and assistance, bearing with all things, that cannot particularly be insisted upon; and especially conforming unto him, who knows how to have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way.

2. There is required, 'a representation of Christ;' and that in all his offices. (1.) A representation of him in the rule and conduct of the church. That the church under our rule and conduct, may be sensible that the government of Christ is spiritual and holy. What a woful representation of Christ is made by men, who undertake to rule the church of God, with rods and axes, with fire and fagot? Is this to represent the meek and holy King of the church, or rather, a devouring tyrant, unto the world? It is our great work in what interest Christ hath given us in the rule of the church, to represent him, as spiritual, as holy, as meek, as universally tending to edification, and not to destruction. (2.) To represent Christ in his prophetical office. He was the great teacher of the church; and the principal work of ministers is, 'to preach the Word in season and out of season,' by all means to carry on the church in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I will give them 'pastors that shall feed them with knowledge and understanding.' Those who take upon themselves to be pastors, and neglect this work of feeding the flock, may, at as cheap a rate, and with equal modesty, renounce Jesus Christ.

(3.) Christ is to be represented in the imitable part of his sacerdotal office, which is to make continual prayers and intercession for the church, and that church in particular whereunto we belong. So the apostle speaks, Col. iv. 12. 'Epaphras, who is one of you (i. e. he was one of their elders and teachers), a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' It is a great work thus, in all these things, to represent Christ in all his offices unto the church. And indeed, who is sufficient for these things? I might add,

3. 'Zeal for Christ.' He that comes as an ambassador from Christ, in Christ's stead, will have zeal for all the concerns of Christ in the church; for his worship, for the purity of his ordinances, for the conversion of souls, and for the building up of the saints. This is required of them who are thus a gift from Christ.

This is the first thing that my text doth suggest unto me, namely, that the ministry is the gift of Christ.

And having proceeded so far, I will here stay a little, and desire the church would attend to their work and duty. After which, if God give strength, I will speak somewhat more unto the eminency of this gift, according as it is set out in this text.

[Then the church assented to the election, by the lifting up of their hands; and the Doctor went on.]

I have shewed you, that the ministry and ministers are a gift that Christ himself gave the church. I shall now shew you, which was the second part of my proposition, 'that it is a great and eminent gift,' or an eminent fruit of the exaltation and mediation of Christ.

First, It appears to be so, from the 'great and glorious preparation' that was made for it. When did Christ give this gift? 'When,' saith he, 'he ascendeth up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' The words are taken out of Psal. lxviii. 17, 18. 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men.' The words you see in the first place are spoken of God himself, applied by our apostle to Christ, upon these two grounds. 1. Because it was peculiarly the Son of God, who appeared so to the fathers under the Old Testament. It was he who appeared to Abraham, and gave him the promise; and to Moses in the bush: it was he who gave the law at mount Sinai; and appeared to Joshua for the conquest of Canaan, where the church was to be set up: so it was still the same person, though the articles were varied. 2. Because whatever was done in a way of solemnity under the Old Testament, was a representation, or a means of introducing of things that were to be done under the New. How did God lead captivity captive, on the glorious giving

of the law upon mount Sinai? That was the day wherein he made his people free. They had no rule, no order, no polity before that, but were under the relics of that captivity which they underwent in Egypt. God now had conquered Pharaoh, and triumphed gloriously over him in the Red Sea, over him and his host, who had kept the people so long in bondage. He led captivity captive, and brought forth his people into liberty, though it was but an initial liberty; it was a bondage in comparison of what was to ensue; but it was the beginning of liberty to them: and all this was to represent the glorious conquest at the ascension of Christ, expressed, Col. ii. 15. 'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, or in himself.' When he spoiled Pharaoh, he triumphed over him gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. It was the same divine person who did that as a type of what he would do, when he should spoil principalities and powers, Satan, death, hell, sin, and all the spiritual adversaries of the church, triumphing over them; then did he lead captivity captive. And therefore you may observe the change of the words, which all do who speak to this thing. In the Psalms, it is said, 'Thou hast ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.' In my text it is said, 'He ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' Though Christ be spoken of as God in the sixty-eighth Psalm, wherein he was incapable of receiving gifts; yet it was in a mystery and prophecy, that he should be in that state and condition wherein he should receive them, and receive them that he might give them; as in Acts ii. 32. 'When he was exalted on the right hand of God, and received the gift of the Spirit,' he then gave it out unto men.

What is all this great preparation now for? What is it the apostle ushers in upon this theatre of glory? Nothing less than the giving of ministers unto the church. He ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. What I pray! some to be pastors and teachers. There is a greater glory in giving a minister to a poor congregation, than there is in the instalment and enthroning of all the popes and cardinals, and metropolitans that ever were in the world: let their glory be what it will, Christ is upon

his theatre of glory in the communication of this office, and these officers.

Wherein will you say is this glory? You see no beauty, no comeliness in it: no more did the unbelieving world in the person of Christ, nor ways of Christ. Was there not a great deal of glory in the setting apart of Aaron unto his service, in all his glorious garments and ornaments, with all the solemnity of sacrifices that was used therein? doubtless there was. But, saith our apostle, 'It had no glory in comparison of the ministry of the Spirit. This is a glory that doth excel;' 2 Cor. iii. 10. The reason why we see not the glory of it is, because we are carnal. It is a spiritual glory. God himself presides over the work of this day. 'I will place my tabernacle with them, and I will walk with them, and be their God;' Levit. xx. 13. If we are the church and tabernacle of God, God walks among us this day; Christ is among us by his special presence. 'Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;' Matt. xviii. 20. And much more may his presence be expected in so great a transaction of his authority, as this we are now engaged in. The holy and elect angels are present with us, to give glory to the solemnity. Hence our apostle charges Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 21. 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, to observe these things.' Why before the elect angels? because they are present as witnesses in the collation of authority from Christ. Thou hast thousands of witnesses more than thou seest; there are more eyes upon thee than thou takest notice of; God is present, Christ is present, the elect angels are present. These things are the true and faithful sayings of God. Here then is glory and beauty, in that it is not only a gift, but an eminent gift. That is the first thing in my text.

Secondly, It is glorious and eminent from the foundation and spring of it, which is the humiliation and death of Christ. 'Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth.' Why doth the apostle mention here Christ's descending? Was it to take the advantage of a word? because, having mentioned his ascension, will he mention also his descension? no, that is not the way of the Holy Ghost. There was no reason to

mention it absolutely in this place: it must be with reference to the end, that was under consideration. There is something, saith he, in Christ's descending into the lower part of the earth, that doth contribute to this great gift of the ministry.

The lower part of the earth may have a double interpretation. 1. The earth may be spoken of with reference to the whole world. 2. Some part of the earth may be spoken of with reference to some other part.

If you take it in the first sense, Christ's descending into the lower part of the earth, i. e. into this lower part of the creation, which the earth is; then it is the incarnation of Christ, and his humiliation, that he intends; which is so expressed, John iii. 13. 'No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man,' &c. Christ's descending and coming down, was by taking our nature upon him; so it may be here. He descended into the lower part of the earth, i. e. He came and assumed our nature, and was here in a state of humiliation.

Or, 2. The lower part of the earth intends a comparison between some part of the earth itself; and so may be taken for the grave; he descended into the grave. The burial of Christ, which was a great and evident testimony of his real death, is that which is intended; and so I look upon it in this place. The very descent of Christ into the grave, which is the lowest part of the earth that mankind descend into, is the apostle's meaning.

And observe from hence, that the death of Christ hath a great influence into this gift of the ministry. It is a branch that grew out of the grave of Christ: let it be esteemed as lightly as men please, had not Christ died for it, we had not had a ministry in the world.

And two ways the ministry relates to the death of Christ. 1. Because it was necessary unto his receiving of that power, whereby alone he was able to give ministers. See that at large, Phil. ii. 6—10. 'It was his humbling himself unto the death, even the death of the cross,' that was required to 'that exaltation,' whereby he had power to give ministers. The mediatorial authority of Christ, whereby he was enabled to give ministers to the church, was founded in his death. And, 2. It respects his death, because the very end of the

ministry is, to preach that peace to mankind, which was made by the death of Christ; Eph. ii. 14. 'He is our peace,' he hath made peace for us; and, in ver. 17. 'came and preached peace to those who were afar off, and to those who were nigh.' How did Christ come and preach peace to the Gentiles, to them that were afar off? It was no otherwise than by instituting the office of the ministry, and sending his ministers to preach peace to them. And we that are ministers may know the near relation of our office to the death of Christ, which will greatly direct us in the work we have to do; which is, I say, to preach that peace that was made with God by Christ. This is another thing in the text that sets forth the beauty, glory, and eminency of this great gift of Christ.

SERMON IV.*

You are a church of ancient standing, and therefore are acquainted both with the duty and practice of it. God hath guided you to call them to office over and among you, who have been long experienced in the work of the ministry; so that I am sure neither they nor you stand in any need of my instruction, as to particular duties. Therefore I shall speak a word in general unto that which is the foundation of all our station, work, and duty, from these words, in

1 Cor. xii. 11.—*But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

There is this disadvantage in preaching upon a particular occasion, especially for one who hath no more strength than I, that either we must omit insisting on the particular explication of the text, or be prevented in that which we aim at particularly from it. Both cannot be done; therefore I shall only give you the substance of the words, in that proposition which I intend to insist upon; namely,

That it is the work of the Spirit of God in all ages of the church to communicate spiritual gifts, and abilities to those who are called, according unto his mind, to the ministry of the church, to enable them unto all evangelical administrations, to his glory, and the edification of the church.

Had I time, I would inquire into these two things: 1. Whether the Holy Ghost doth indeed continue to communicate spiritual gifts, distinct from natural endowments, and acquired abilities, to the discharge of the work of the ministry, to his glory, and the edification of the church. And, 2. Whether these spiritual gifts and abilities, so communicated, be not the material call to the work of the ministry, antecedently required to the formal call thereunto.

As to the first, It is opposed by them, who say, that these spiritual gifts we talk of, are nothing indeed but men's natural and acquired abilities, with an ordinary blessing of

* This sermon was preached at an ordination, April 3, 1678.

God upon their ministry; and for other spiritual gifts, there are none.

As to the second, It is denied, that there is, or ought to be, an outward way, and order for calling men to the office of the ministry, and that a compliance therewith makes their call good, valuable, and lawful, whether they have of these gifts we talk of or no. And in these two lie all the contests about church order and worship, that we have in the world.

But I shall only speak in the general unto the above proposition, viz. That it is the work of the Holy Spirit, in providing of an able ministry of the New Testament, for the use of the church to the end of the world, to communicate to them who are called according to his mind, spiritual gifts and abilities, to enable them to the discharge of their duty, in the administration of all ordinances, to the glory of Christ, and the edification of the church. The proving of this one proposition, in which is the life of all gospel order, is all I shall do at this time.

And I shall do it in these following observations, principles, and deductions from it.

First, Our Lord Jesus Christ hath faithfully promised, Matt. xxviii. 20. 'that he will be present with his church unto the end of the world.' It is his temple and habitation 'wherein he dwells, and in which he walks.' And this is that which essentially and fundamentally differenceth his church from any other assembly or society of men whatever. Let men cast themselves into what order they please, and let it be the order that they apprehend prescribed unto them in the Scripture; or let them invent a better for themselves, as they think; and let them derive their title to power and authority whence they will; if Christ be not present with them, when they have done, they are 'no gospel church.' They want a foundation; and where there is no foundation, the higher they raise the building, or the more glorious they make the appearance of it, the sooner it will tumble down, and come to nothing. I shall not repeat those promises of Christ's presence now; they are known unto you: and this is the great interest of any church, to secure the promised presence of Christ with them. You have, I hope, under the conduct of the Holy Spirit of God, been guided in your

choice of such persons as are able and faithful to go before you in the work of the Lord: but your design ought to be, that thereby you might receive pledges of the presence of Christ with you, else all other things will be of no value. There are some who are little solicitous about these things. Do but build a house in such a frame, and say certain words, and suppose Christ is immured there; and there is a church built and made. But the observance of all outward rules and orders, according to the gospel, will not constitute a church, unless Christ be taken into it. Moses built a tabernacle according to the mind of God; 'according unto all that God commanded him, so did he;' Exod. xl. 16. But when he had framed it exactly, and set it up, and put every thing in its place, it was but an ordinary tabernacle, till the glory of God entered into it. And so it was with Solomon's temple; it was but an ordinary house, until the glory of God entered into it. And suppose we could frame our church societies, according to the rule of the gospel, as Moses framed the tabernacle according to the pattern shewed him in the mount; they would be no churches of Christ, unless the glory of Christ enter into them. Here is our difference and advantage, the glory of God entered into the tabernacle and temple of old, in clouds and darkness, but the glory of God enters into the gospel church, under the New Testament, in light. This is the first head; Christ hath promised to be with his church, to the end and consummation of all things.

Secondly, Christ is thus present with his church, principally and fundamentally by his Spirit. There are three ways of the presence of Christ: 1. He is everywhere essentially present; present with all things by the immensity of his divine nature: Christ did not promise this, for it is not a subject for a promise. The promises are of what may be, and not of what cannot but be. This presence is necessary, and cannot be otherwise; neither doth it make any alteration. It doth not make a church; it doth not make one place heaven, another hell; I speak of the immense presence of the divine nature. Again, 2. Christ is, or may be present in his human nature: this was that which brought a great entanglement on the spirits of his disciples. He told them, he would never leave them; and 'where but two

or three of them were assembled in his name, he would be among them;' Matt. xviii. 20. At length he comes, and tells them, 'it is expedient for you that I go away;' John xvi. 7. This filled their hearts with trouble; they knew not how to reconcile these things. Afterward they were told that he was so gone from them, as that they must not look for him, till the day of judgment; Acts iii. 21. There must be therefore some other presence of Christ besides the essential presence of his divine nature, and besides the presence of his human nature; how else shall the promise be accomplished? saith Christ, I will tell you what that presence is, 'I will send you the Holy Ghost,' to supply the presence of my human nature. It is the substance of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, to declare this. 'I will send you the Comforter to abide with you,' to enable you to all church work. Therefore though I am with you, and have instructed you, yet you can perform no church work at all until the Holy Ghost comes; 'Abide at Jerusalem till you have the promise of the Spirit.' After the ascension of Christ, the apostles went about no church work, till they had received the Holy Ghost. And Christ hath no vicar, but the Spirit. The truth is, the world grew weary of him, and took the work out of his hands, for which he was promised; and he would have nothing to do in that which they call the church. I need not prove this; it hath been the faith of the Catholic church, from the first foundation of it, that the promised presence of Christ with his church was by his Spirit. Some begin to say in our days, that Christ is no otherwise present than by the outward ordinances of it, his word and sacraments. I grant he is present with them, as pledges of his presence, and instruments wherewith, by his Spirit, he doth effectually work. But to make them the whole presence of Christ with us, I do not know what better church state we have than the Jews, when they had the law of old.

Thirdly, This presence of the Spirit is promised, and given unto the church by 'an everlasting covenant;' Isa. lix. 21. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of

thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' To whom is this promise made? It is made unto the gospel church. In the verse foregoing, 'The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord: as for me, this is my covenant with them.' With whom? With them the Redeemer comes to in Zion, to redeem from iniquity. What is God's covenant with them? It is his word; 'his word shall be in them.' Suppose this promise to cease, and God doth not continue his word to any people; will not their church state cease, which is built upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, which is the word of God? Yes, take away the foundation, the state must fall. God's covenant is broken with a people, where he doth not continue his word. But how is it with the 'Spirit of God?' He is also promised in the same covenant: now, suppose there be not a continuance of this promise, then I say, all covenant relation between God and a people, must be dissolved. 'For this is my covenant,' saith the Lord, &c. q. d. If I maintain a covenant with a people, I will give them my Spirit to abide with them for ever. That covenant whereby you are joined, is dependent on this great promise; and if this be not made good, your church state comes to an end, notwithstanding whatever outward order there may be among you: but he hath given his church a covenant which 'shall abide for ever.'

Fourthly, It is from hence, that the ministry of the gospel is 'the ministry of the Spirit;' 2 Cor. iii. 6—8. 'Who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit.' There were never but two ministrations, or two ministries in the world, that were accepted of God, the one was the ministration 'of the letter, and of death;' the other was, and is the ministration 'of the Spirit and of life;' and they were both glorious ministrations. That of the letter and death, was glorious from its institution. You know what a glorious institution it had at mount Sinai, from the manner of its performance, in a glorious sanctuary, or tabernacle, and temple: and from its signification, it was glorious. 'But the ministration of the Spirit, is much more glorious.' There never were but these two ministrations. If there be a ministration that is not a

ministration of the letter and of death, nor a ministration of the Spirit and of life, it is antichrist's. Now the first it cannot be; the ministration of the letter and of death, is the ministration of the law; and the ministration of the gospel, is the ministration of the Spirit. But say some, it is so, because the Spirit of God hath revealed all gospel dispensations; without which, it had not been within the compass of the reason of man to have found them out. But in answer to this, the Spirit of God revealed all the ordinances and ministrations of old, from first to last, even the little additions that David made after Moses's time. 1 Chron. xxviii. 12. 19. 'All these things did the hand of God teach me by the Spirit.' So that if it be the ministration of the Spirit, because the Spirit revealed them, so was the law the ministration of the Spirit, because the Spirit revealed that. The ministration of the Spirit must signify, either that the Spirit is the efficient of the ministration, or the effect of it. If the Spirit be the efficient of the ministration, then it is the Holy Spirit of God, giving spiritual gifts and abilities to the ministers of the gospel, to enable them to administer all gospel ordinances to the glory of Christ, and the edification of the church. Or the ministration of the Spirit may signify the communication of him, and so be the effect of the ministration. Gal. iii. 2. 'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' i. e. Received ye the Spirit by the law, or by the gospel? Then this follows, that so long as there is the preaching of the gospel, there is the communication of the Spirit: take it which way you will, it is sufficient for my end. If you take the Spirit to be the efficient of the ministration of the church, enabling its ministers to perform their work, or for the effect of the ministration, he is to abide with the church for ever. For the clearing of this, which is the hinge on which all gospel order turns, we have gone thus far, that Christ hath promised the Spirit to be with the church: that it is neither the essential presence of his divine or human nature in particular, and that the Spirit is promised to be with the church, by an everlasting and unchangeable covenant; from whence it is, the gospel is the ministration of the spirit, and of life, and not of death.

Fifthly, Let us consider the general end, why the Spirit

is thus promised unto the church. God hath promised unto Jesus Christ, that he shall have a kingdom and church in the world, while the sun and moon endureth; Psal. lxxii. 17. 'His name shall endure for ever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun,' i. e. To the end of the world. Isa. ix. 7. it is said, 'of the increase of his government, or church, there shall be no end;' he shall order it for ever. Matt. xvi. 18. 'I will build my church upon this rock,' i. e. upon himself, 'and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.' Now this promise doth Christ require, that we should mix with faith, which we cannot do, unless there be some ground for the infallible accomplishment of it. Whereon then doth depend the certain accomplishment of this great promise, that God hath made unto Jesus Christ? concerning which, we have as much reason to have our faith exercised at this day, as ever. It must depend on some work of God, or man. Suppose it depends on some work of man, i. e. upon the steadiness of the will of man, in yielding obedience unto Jesus Christ, and so continuing his church and kingdom in the world: leaving the ordering of the things of the church, according to God's institution of it, and maintain withal, that God doth not by effectual grace determine the will of man to obedience, and then God himself can only conjecture. Nor does this lay any ground for us to mix it with faith; but rather faith will depend on men's doing their duty in the world, which indeed can be no real ground of faith: for what happens in one place, in the same circumstances of things, may fall out in another: and we know some places where the gospel hath been embraced, and afterward hath come to nothing. Therefore, certainly, the accomplishment of this promise must depend upon the work of God. If you ask, What work of God that is, whereon the certainty of this promise doth depend? I say, it is this work, and no other, of sending the Holy Spirit.

There are but two things to be considered therein; its internal form, and its external form. Its internal form is union to Jesus Christ by saving grace; its external form and constitution is according to the law of the gospel, and its power. And this cannot be continued without the continued ministration of the Spirit of God, in and with his church.

To suppose the internal form, that we may have union with Christ, or saving grace without the effectual work of the Spirit, is at once to blot out all. Therefore, if God should cease to communicate the Spirit, as to an internal saving work upon the hearts of the elect, the church would cease, as to its internal form. No church would have a relation unto Jesus Christ as the mystical head, if God should cease to communicate the Spirit as to gifts. For the outward administration and form of the church, whatever order you bring into it, cannot be accounted a church of Christ, unless there be the presence of Christ in it. And no man can make confession, 'that Jesus Christ is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;' 1 Cor. xii. 3. You can make no profession, continue no dispensation of ordinances, or any thing that is acceptable unto God, without the Holy Ghost. The sum of all you do this day is, your acknowledging Jesus Christ to be the Lord, that you are in subjection unto his authority, that you are in the observation of his appointments, and that you recommend your consciences unto him who is 'your Lord and your God;' but you must have the Spirit of God, and his presence, in order to this. The Holy Ghost is promised and given for the continuance and preservation of a church here below, and therein of the accomplishment of this promise, which God hath made to us, to continue with the church to the end of all things. And if he should cease, as to either of his operations, either in working internal saving grace, or spiritual abilities for gospel administrations, the church must cease both in the internal and external form and power of it.

Having laid this foundation, I come in the next place,

Sixthly, To some particular proof of the proposition; namely, That the Holy Ghost thus promised, thus sent, thus given, doth furnish the ministers of the gospel, according to his mind, with spiritual abilities in the discharge of their work; and without it, they are no way fitted for, nor able to it; no way accepted with Christ in what they do, nor can give any faithful account of what they undertake. It is that which the Lord Jesus Christ intends to declare unto us, Matt. xxv. 14—30. You have an account there given of the continuance of the church, the kingdom of Christ in the world, to the end of it. The great Lord is gone away, and

intends to return again at the end of the world; in the mean time, he hath appointed servants to take care of the administration of the affairs of his house and kingdom: and for this end, he gives them talents that they may trade with. He gives them variously as he pleases; 'to one, five; to another, two; and to another, but one:' and he provides work for all their talents. Some men have grown so rich in the world, that they care not to employ their stock; but it must not be so with us. We shall have trade for all our talents. None have so little but they may trade. He that had but one might have traded, as well as he that had five, and been as well accepted. It is agreed by all, that they are spiritual abilities that Christ gives his servants to trade with in the administration of gospel ordinances. And these three things are plainly held forth in the parable. 1. That wherever Jesus Christ calls and appoints a minister in his house, for the building work of it, he gives him spiritual abilities to do that work by the Holy Ghost. He set none at work in his house, when he went away, but he gave them talents. 2. For men to take upon them to serve Christ as officers in the work of his house, who have received none of these spiritual abilities to work with, is a high presumption, and casts reflection of dishonour on Jesus Christ, as if he called to work, and gave no strength; as though he called to trade, and gave no stock; or required spiritual duties, and gave no spiritual abilities. Christ will say to such at the last day, 'How came ye in hither?' 3. This is plain in the parable also, that those who have received talents, or spiritual gifts and abilities of the Holy Ghost, they are to trade with them. And I do not know a warning, that I judge more necessary to be given those who are called this day, than to charge them not to trade too much with their natural gifts, and abilities, and learning. These are talents in their kind; but it is the Spirit must manage all that learning they have, or it will prejudice them, and you also. I have known some good men have been so addicted to their study, that they have thought the last day of the week sufficient to prepare for their ministry, though they employ all the rest of the week in other studies. But your great business is to trade with your spiritual abilities.

There is another testimony given to this (to name one

or two among many), in Rom. xii. 4—8. 'For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation,' &c. It is not to my present concern, whether offices or duties are intended in this place; but three things are plain to me in this text. 1. That this discourse and direction doth concern the ordinary state of the church in all ages. I profess to you, I had rather a thousand times be of their opinion, as bad as it is, who say, that all church state is ceased, than that there may be a church state, when these gifts and graces are not. If I did not see these graces and gifts continued to some, to keep up the ordinances of the church in some measure, I should believe it had ceased. 2. That gifts are the foundation of all church work, whether it be in office or out of office. 'Having therefore gifts, let us,' saith the apostle, do so and so. If there be no spiritual gifts, there is no spiritual work. Spiritual gifts are the foundation of office, which is the foundation of work in the church, and of all gospel administrations in a special manner, according to the gifts received. Truly, it may be, you may think it lost labour to prove this; but there is nothing more despised or reproached in this world, than this one apprehension, that there are spiritual gifts given unto persons, to enable them to perform all gospel administrations. 3. That not only the discharge of duty and work depends on the administration of gifts, but the measure of work depends upon the measure of gifts; it is according to the measure every one hath received: and there are many measures. As long as there is any measure of spiritual gifts, let it not be despised among you. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are not only for work, but, I say, for the measure of work; Eph. iv. 8—13. All these spiritual gifts the Holy Ghost doth bestow, to enable persons to perform their work.

Seventhly, As spiritual gifts are bestowed unto this end, so they are necessary for it. There can be no gospel administration without spiritual gifts; the ministration of the

gospel being the ministration of the Spirit; and all gospel ministrations are spiritual ministrations. The truth is, one reason why they are called so, and are so, is, because they are no way to be administered to the glory of Christ, but by the aid and help of these spiritual gifts. If the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed carnal ordinances, such as are suited to the reason and strength of a man, there had been no need for him to promise the assistance of the Spirit. 'The spirit of a man knows the things of a man;' 1 Cor. ii. 11. All the things within the compass of a man, the spirit of a man will find them out, and give strength for the performance of them. Saith Christ, John vi. 63. 'My words, they are Spirit,' and all my offices and ordinances are spiritual; and thus there is a necessity of spiritual gifts for their administration: so that spiritual gifts and spiritual administrations live and die together. And the way whereby the world lost the spiritual ministrations of the gospel, was by the neglect and contempt of spiritual gifts, whereby alone they can be performed. This was the ground of the apostacy of the primitive church; they grew weary of spiritual ministrations. It is the most difficult and laborious ministry. Men's hearts waxing carnal, they grew weary of spiritual things; they did not care to wait upon Christ for supplies of grace, and the gifts of the Spirit; for these gifts are not grace, and in truth will flourish long in no other soil but where there is grace. As we should not have such a product of sin, were it not for original corruption, whence it grows, so flourishing gifts will not long grow, but in the soil of the Spirit. How many persons with gifts have flourished for a while, and then have withered; because they were planted in no good soil. It will be drudgery for any man to keep up spiritual gifts, where they have not a spiritual soil to grow in. The world grew weary of gospel ministrations, and would not keep up that way. What then? They found out imaginations suited to their inclinations; they will have prayer-books to read, ceremonies to perform, and a number of inventions to keep up a form of worship, without those spiritual gifts. We have an instance in the church of Rome, what various extravagant things they have done to make an outward show, when they had lost spiritual gifts. All forms of worship are nothing but to keep an outward appearance. They did not like to retain

these gifts in their minds, whereby alone spiritual worship is to be administered. The principle of the apostacy of all churches in the world is from a weariness of serving God by the aid and assistance of the Spirit.

Eighthly, That there is a communication of spiritual gifts in all gospel ordinances, we plead experience. We know how this is derided by profane scoffers: but we plead the experience of those, who are humble and holy, and have a spiritual acquaintance with these things. I hope I may plead against the world, the experience of this congregation. Have you had no experience of those ministrations? Have you never found in the administrations of those whom God hath called to go before you, evidences of the presence of Christ by his Spirit in the communication of gifts to them, to make them effectual to your edification and consolation? Have you not had 'a proof of the Spirit of Christ speaking in them?' 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

It is intolerable presumption for men to think of carrying on gospel administrations without the supplies of the Spirit, as you, who are God's people, can testify. And there is no congregation of Christ, but can bear testimony to it, that 'the Spirit divides to every man as he will;' gives out, as he pleases, of his assistance. Let men therefore pretend never so much, that they are able to be ministers of the New Testament without any of those aids and assistances, whereof we have been discoursing; let them please themselves with the applause they may receive from persons unacquainted with the mystery and glory of these things; let them despise and condemn whatever is testified to the contrary; it is certain, where the gifts of the Spirit of God, as to the gospel ministrations of the church, are lost or neglected, Christ is so also, the Spirit of God is so also, and all the benefits of the gospel will be so too.

I have but one word to add, and that is of exhortation, unto those whom Christ hath called unto the work of the ministry, and whom you have called this day. I told you, at the beginning, I would not give them instruction, but I may give them a word of exhortation; and that is, to attend unto the ministry whereunto God hath called them, upon this foundation. And there are three motives I shall give them unto the work.

First, It is the most difficult ministration of any that a person can be called unto; as it is great, so it is difficult. Any way of administration is easy in comparison of this of spiritual gifts; easy to flesh and blood. What an easy ministration, with all their altars and services, hath the church of Rome provided for their ministers? so to read, and so to sing, come as they will, prepared or not prepared, having hearts and minds filled with what they will; this is a ministry for them easier than any trade, and in this, their natural endowments and abilities are employed. But if we intend the ministers by the gifts received from the Holy Ghost, the matter and root wherein alone they will grow must be carefully preserved. If grace decays in our hearts, a ministry in gifts will grow burdensome and unpleasing to ourselves, as well as useless to the congregation. We must look well unto the soil, or it will be of no advantage that we have this ministry committed to us. It is required there be no unuseful ministers. Hand and heart must be always filled with the work; 'Meditate on these things;' 1 Tim. iv. 15. If you have undertaken the work of the ministry, you must be meditating on it. Unless you are in these things continually, you will not make faithful dispensers of the word. A man may preach a very good sermon, who is otherwise himself; but he will never make a good minister of Jesus Christ, whose heart and mind is not always in the work. Spiritual gifts will require continual ruminating on the things of the gospel in our minds, which makes it a difficult ministry; that our hearts and minds may be cast into the mould and form of these things, which we are to deliver to others. And it is surprising, how a little necessary diversion will unfit the mind for this work.

Secondly, As it is a very difficult work to carry on to a right improvement of it, so it is a glorious work; let the world deride it as they will. The great design of the apostle in 2 Cor. iii. is to shew, it is much more glorious than the old ministration was. Really, that was a very glorious ministration. But this ministry that is committed to us hath more glory in it, being 'the ministration of the Spirit,' whereby souls are converted by the power of grace, and holy converse with God kept up. It is much more glorious than beholding the high-priest in Solomon's temple being

under the eye of the Holy God, who is Judge of these ministerial gifts; therefore do not divert from them by any means.

Thirdly, It is the only ministry that is indeed effectual unto the edification and building up of the church; Eph. iv. 8, &c. This is the great end for which gospel ministers are appointed, 'till all are brought,' by their ministry, 'to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' The Lord prosper it in your hands.

Give me leave to speak one word unto you that are the church. Know what you are to do, in reference unto those you have called, and made officers this day. Pray unto God for a fresh communication of gifts unto them; they are capable of it. It is a renewed act of grace, that prepares and opens the soul for receiving new communications of God's grace, for the administration of the holy things of Christ in the congregation. Pray much for them to that end and purpose.

SERMON V.*

And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.—Jer. iii. 15.

ALL the names of the officers of the church under the New Testament have a double signification, a general and more large signification, and a special signification. As for instance, διάκονος, a 'deacon,' hath a general signification; it signifies any minister or servant: and it hath a special signification, when it denotes that peculiar officer, which was instituted in the church, to take care of the poor. And so the name of a pastor hath a more general, and a more special signification. In general, it signifies any teacher or officer in the church, ordinary or extraordinary; in special, it signifies that peculiar officer in the church, which, as such, is distinguished from a teacher. 'He gave some to be pastors and teachers;' Eph. iv. 11. For there is a distinction between pastor and teacher, not as to degree, but as to order. I do not use the distinction in the sense of those who make bishops and presbyters differ in degree, but not in order; but it is a distinction as to that beautiful order, which Christ hath instituted in his church. Christ hath instituted a beautiful order in his church, if it were discovered and improved. And I have wished sometimes, I could live to see it; but I do not think I shall. Yet this I would recommend to my brethren, as the way to discover the order of Christ in the church; and there is no way to discover it, but by the harmony that there is between gifts, office, and edification. The original of all church order and rule is in gifts; the exercise of those gifts is by office; the end of all those gifts and offices is edification.

Now, I believe, I can demonstrate, that all ordinary spiritual gifts, that Christ hath given to his church, are reducible to four heads, and all of them are for the exercise of

* This sermon was preached at an ordination, Sept. 8, 1682.

these gifts; for they must all be exercised distinctly. Herein you will find out the beautiful order of Christ in the church, and not else. I say, all gifts may be reduced to four heads. The one head of these gifts is to be exercised by the pastor; one head by the teacher; one by the ruler; and one by the deacon: and all these gifts, exercised by all these officers, answer all ends for the edification of the church. For it is a vain opinion, that the rule and conduct of Christ's church is either in one, or in all. There is nothing in what I have declared, but what is the design of the apostle in Rom. xii. 6—8. Let us study that harmony more, and we shall find more of the beauty and glory of it.

I shall speak of these pastors mentioned here in the text; and I shall speak of them in general, as all teaching officers in the church, which is the general signification of the word. And all that I shall speak of them is, to remind myself, and my brethren, and you, of somewhat of the duty of such a pastor; what is incumbent on him; what is expected from him. Now I do not design to go through all the necessary duties of a pastor or teacher; I only design to give some instances.

First, The duty of such an officer of the church,* a pastor, teacher, elder of the church, is that mentioned in the text, 'to feed the church with knowledge and understanding.' This feeding is by preaching of the gospel. He is no pastor, who doth not feed his flock. It belongs essentially to the office; and that not now and then (according to the figure and image that is set up of the ministry in the world, a dead idol) as occasion serves. But the apostle saith, Acts vi. 4. 'We will give ourselves continually to the word. It is to labour in the word and doctrine;' 1 Tim. v. 17. to make all things subservient to this work of preaching and instructing the church; to do it in that frame the apostle mentions, in Col. i. 28. he speaks of his preaching, and the design of his preaching, 'whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' How doth he do it? 'Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which work-

* It is proper to inform the reader, that several things in this sermon are to be found in Dr. Owen's 'True Nature of a Gospel Church,' chap. v.

eth in me mightily.' There is not one word in our translation, that answers the emphasis of the original words; 'Whereunto I labour,' Εἰς ὁ καὶ κοπιῶ. Κοπιῶ is to labour with diligence and intention, with weariness and industry. I labour, 'usque ad fatigationem,' to the spending of myself. Striving, ἀγωνιζόμενος; striving as a man that runs in a race; or striving as a man that wrestles for victory; as men did in their public contests. And how? κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ, according to the effectual, in-working, or inward operation of him, ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ, who does effectually work in me. We cannot reach the emphasis by any words in our language. And how is all this? ἐν δυνάμει, with mighty power. Here is the frame of the apostle's spirit: it should give dread to us in the consideration of it. I labour diligently, I strive as in a race, I wrestle for victory, by the mighty in-working power of Christ working in me, and that with great and exceeding power.

What I shall do is, to shew you, in some instances, what is required unto this work of teaching, or of feeding the congregation with knowledge and understanding, in this duty of preaching the word.

1. There is spiritual wisdom in understanding the mysteries of the gospel, that we may be able to declare the whole counsel of God, and the riches and treasures of the grace of Christ unto the souls of men. See Acts xx. 27. 1 Cor. ii. 1—4. Eph. iii. 7—9. Many, in the church of God, were, in those days of light, growing and thriving; they had a great insight into spiritual things, and into the mysteries of the gospel. The apostle prays, that they might all have it; Eph. i. 17, 18. 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

Really, it is no easy thing for ministers to instruct to such kind of duties. If there be not some degree of eminency in themselves, how shall we lead on such persons as these to perfection? We must labour ourselves to have a thorough knowledge of these mysteries, or we shall be use-

less to a great part of the church. There is spiritual wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel required hereunto.

2. Authority is required. What is authority in a preaching ministry? It is a consequent of unction, and not of office. The scribes had an outward call to teach in the church, but they had no unction, no anointing, that could evidence they had the Holy Ghost in his gifts and graces. Christ had no outward call, but he had an unction; he had a full unction of the Holy Ghost in his gifts and graces for the preaching of the gospel. Hereon there was a controversy about his authority. The scribes say unto him, Mark xi. 28. 'By what authority dost thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?' The Holy Ghost determines the matter. Matt. vii. 29. 'He preached as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' They had authority of office, but not of unction; Christ only had that. And preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit, which men quarrel so much about, is nothing less than the evidence, in preaching, of unction, in the communication of gifts and grace unto them for the discharge of their office: for it is a vain thing for men to assume and personate authority. So much evidence as they have of unction from God in gifts and grace, so much authority they have, and no more in preaching: and let every one then keep within his bounds.

3. Another thing required hereunto, is experience of the power of the things we preach to others. I think truly, that no man preaches that sermon well to others, that doth not first preach it to his own heart. He who doth not feed on, and digest, and thrive by what he prepares for his people, he may give them poison as far as he knows; for, unless he finds the power of it in his own heart, he cannot have any ground of confidence, that it will have power in the hearts of others. It is an easier thing to bring our heads to preach, than our hearts to preach. To bring our heads to preach, is but to fill our minds and memories with some notions of truth of our own or other men, and speak them out to give satisfaction to ourselves and others: this is very easy. But to bring our hearts to preach, is to be transformed into the power of these truths; or to find the power of them both before, in fashioning our minds and hearts,

and in delivering of them, that we may have benefit; and to be acted with zeal for God, and compassion to the souls of men. A man may preach every day in the week, and not have his heart engaged once. This hath lost us powerful preaching in the world, and set up, instead of it, quaint orations; for such men never seek after experience in their own hearts: and so it is come to pass, that some men's preaching, and some men's not preaching, have lost us the power of what we call the ministry: that, though there be twenty or thirty thousand in orders, yet the nation perishes for want of knowledge, and is overwhelmed in all manner of sins, and not delivered from them unto this day.

4. Skill to divide the word aright. This skill to divide the word aright, is practical wisdom, in considering the word of God, to take out not only that which is substantial food for the souls of men, but what is meet food for them to whom we preach: and that,

5. Requires the knowledge and consideration of the state of our flocks. He who hath not the state of his flock continually in his eye, and in his mind in his work of preaching, fights uncertainly, as a man beating the air. If he doth not consider what is the state of his flock, with reference to temptations, in reference to their light, or to their darkness, to their growth or to their decays, to their flourishing or to their withering, to the measure of their knowledge and attainments; he who doth not duly consider these things, never preaches aright unto them.

6. There is required too, that we be acted by zeal for the glory of God, and compassion to the souls of men.

Having spoken these few plain words, I may say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' There is required, that spiritual wisdom which is necessary to understand the mysteries of the gospel, able to instruct and lead on to perfection the most grown in our congregation; that authority, which proceeds from unction, and is an evidence of an anointing with the graces and gifts of the Spirit, which alone gives authority in preaching; that experience which conforms our whole souls into every sermon we preach, so as to feel the truth in the power of it; that skill whereby to divide the word aright, &c. Hence we see we have great need to pray for ourselves, and that you should pray for us. Pray for

your ministers. This then is the first duty required of gospel ministers.

Secondly, Another duty required is, continual prayer for the churches over which Christ hath made them overseers. I have not time to confirm these things by particular testimonies: you know how often the apostle expresses it of himself, and enjoins it unto others, continually to pray for the flock.

I will name four reasons why we ought to do so, and four things we ought to pray for.

1. My first reason is, because I believe that no man can have any evidence in his own soul, that he doth conscientiously perform any ministerial duty towards his flock, who doth not continually pray for them. Let him preach as much as he will, visit as much as he will, speak as much as he will, unless God doth keep up in him a spirit of prayer in his closet and family for them, he can have no evidence that he doth perform any other ministerial duty in a due manner, or that what he doth is accepted with God. I speak to them who are wise, and understand these things.

2. This is the way whereby we may bless our congregations.

Authoritative blessing, as far as I know, is taken from us. There is only that which is euctical and declarative, left to us. Pronouncing the blessing is only euctical and declarative, and not authoritative. Now there is no way whereby we can bless our flock by institution, but by a continual praying for a blessing upon them.

3. If men are but as they used to be, I do not believe any minister, any pastor in the world, can keep up a due love to his church, who doth not pray for them. He will meet with so many provocations, imprudences, and miscarriages, that nothing can keep up his heart with inflamed love towards them, but by praying for them continually. That will conquer all prejudices, if he continues so doing. And,

4. My last reason is this, In our prayers for our people, God will teach us what we shall preach unto them. We cannot pray for them, but we must think on what it is we pray for, and that is the consideration of their condition; and therein God teaches the ministers of the gospel. If it be so with them, this is that they should teach them. The

more we pray for our people, the better shall we be instructed what to preach to them. The apostles, to take us off from all other occasions, 'gave themselves to prayer and the word;' Acts. vi. 4. Prayer is in the first place. It is not personal, but ministerial prayer for the church, and the progress of the gospel.

What shall we pray for?

1. For the success of the word that we preach unto them. This falls in with the light of nature. We are to pray for the success of the word unto all the ends of it; and that is for all the ends of living unto God, for direction to duty, for instruction in the truth, for growth in grace, for all things whereby we may come to the enjoyment of God. We should pray, that all these ends may be accomplished in our congregations, in the dispensation of the word, or else we sow seed at random, which will not succeed merely by our sowing; for let the husbandman break up the fallow ground and harrow it, and cast in the seed, unless showers come, he will have no crop; in like manner, after we have cast the seed of the gospel, though the hearts of men are prepared in some measure, unless there come the showers of the Spirit upon them, there will be no profiting. Therefore let us pray, that a blessing might be upon the word. The ministers of the word preach, and would be accepted with the people; take this 'arcanum' of it, pray over it, and it is the only way to have it accepted in the hearts of the people: Follow it on with prayer.

2. We are to pray for the presence of Christ in all our assemblies; for this is that whereon depends all the efficacy of the ordinances of the gospel. Christ hath given us many promises of it, and we are to act in faith concerning it, and to pray in faith for it in our assemblies, which is a great ministerial duty; and if we do it not, we are ignorant of our duty, and are willing to labour in the fire, where all must perish; we fight at hazard, for all the efficacy of the ordinances of preaching, and praying, doth not depend upon any thing in ourselves, of our gifts, notions, parts, fervency, but it depends only upon the presence of Christ. Make this your business to pray mightily for it in the congregation, to make all these effectual.

3. Our prayers should be with respect unto the state

and condition of the church. It is supposed, he that is a minister is satisfied he hath some measure of understanding and knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, that he is able to conduct the best of the congregation unto salvation; that he knows their measure, their weakness, and their temptations; that he knows the times and seasons in which they are exercised and exposed, whether times of adversity or prosperity; and, as far as possible, knows how it is with their persons. And we ought to suit our prayers according to all we know concerning them, and be satisfied in it, that Christ himself will come in to recover them who are fallen, to establish them who stand, to heal them who do backslide, to strengthen them who are tempted, to encourage them who are running and pressing forward to perfection, to relieve them who are disconsolate and in the dark: and we have of all these sorts in our churches. And our prayers should be for a communication of supplies unto them, continually in all these cases.

Thirdly, It is incumbent on men who are pastors and teachers of churches, to preserve the truth and doctrine of the gospel, that is committed to the church, to keep it entire, and defend it against all opposition. See the weighty words wherewith the apostle gives this in charge unto Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 20. 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.' And, 2 Tim. i. 14. 'That good thing,' *τὴν καλὴν παρακαταθήκην*, 'that good depositum,' that good treasure, 'that is committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.' This charge is given to all of us who are ministers, keep the truth, that good, that blessed thing. 'It is,' saith the apostle, 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that is committed to my trust;' 1 Tim. i. 11. And it is committed to all our trust; and we are to keep it against all opposition. The church is the ground and pillar of truth, to hold up, and declare the truth in and by its ministers. But is that all? No; 'The church is like the tower of David made for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men;' Cant. iv. 4. The ministers of the gospel are shields and bucklers to defend the truth against all adversaries and opposers. The church hath had thousands of bucklers and shields of mighty men, or else the truth had been lost. They are not only to declare it in

the preaching of the gospel; but to defend and preserve it against all opposition; to hold up the shield and buckler of faith against all opposers.

But what is required hereunto?

1. There is required a clear apprehension in ourselves of those doctrines and truths which we are so to defend. Truth may be lost by weakness as well as by wickedness: if we have not a full apprehension of the truth, and that upon its own proper grounds and principles, we shall never be able to defend it. This is to be attained by all ways and means, by the use especially of diligent prayer and study, so that we may be able to stop the mouth of gainsayers.

2. There is required love of the truth. We shall never contend earnestly for the truth, we shall never 'buy it and not sell it,' whatever we know of it, unless our love and value of it arise from a sense and experience of it in our own souls. I fear there is much loss of truth, not for want of light, knowledge, and ability, but for want of love.

I have the advantage of most here present in this, that I know the contest we had for the truths of the gospel, before our troubles began, and was an early person engaged in them; and knew those godly ministers that did contend for them as for their lives and souls; and that all the opposition that was made against them, was never able to discourage them. What were these doctrines? the doctrines of eternal predestination, effectual conversion to God, and the obduration of wicked reprobates by the providence of God. These truths are not lost for want of skill, but for want of love. We scarce hear one word of them; we are almost ashamed to mention them in the church; and he that doth it will be sure to expose himself to public obloquy and scorn: but we must not be ashamed of truth. Formerly we could not meet with a godly minister, but the error of Arminianism was looked upon by him as the ruin and poison of the souls of men: such did tremble at it, wrote and disputed against it. But now it is not so; the doctrine of the gospel is owned still, though little taken notice of by some among ourselves, the love of it being greatly decayed, the sense and the power of it almost lost; but we have got no ground by it; we are not more holy, more fruitful than we were in the preaching those doctrines, and attending diligently unto them.

3. Let us take heed in ourselves of any inclination to novel opinions, especially in, or about, or against such points of faith, as those wherein they who are gone before us and are fallen asleep, found life, comfort, and power. Who would have thought that we should have come to an indifferency as to the doctrine of justification, and quarrel and dispute about the interest of works in justification, about general redemption, which takes off the efficacy of the redeeming work of Christ, and about the perseverance of the saints; when these were the soul and life of them who were gone before us, who found the power and comfort of them. We shall not maintain these truths unless we find the same comfort in them as they did. I have lived to see great alterations in the godly ministers of the nation, both as to zeal and value of those important truths, that were as the life of the reformation; and the doctrine of free-will condemned in a prayer, bound up in the end of your bibles: but now it is grown an indifferent thing, and the horrible corruptions we suffer to be introduced in the doctrine of justification, have weakened all the vitals of religion. Let us, for the remainder of our days, 'buy the truth and sell it not;' and let us be zealous and watchful over any thing that should arise in our congregations.

Bring one man into the congregation who hath a by-opinion, and he shall make more stir about it than all the rest of the congregation, in building up one another in their most holy faith. Take heed lest there be men arising from ourselves, speaking perverse things; which is to make way for grievous wolves to break in and tear and rend the flock.

4. There is skill and ability required hereunto, to discover and be able to oppose and confound the cunning sophistry of the adversaries. Great prayer, watchfulness, and diligence are required, that we may be able to attend unto these things. And those who are less skilled, may do well to advise with those who are more exercised in them, to give them help and assistance.

Lastly, I shall mention one duty more that is required of pastors and teachers in the church, and that is, that we labour diligently for the conversion of souls. This work is committed to them. I should not mention this, but to rec-

tify a mistake in some. The end of all particular churches, is the calling and edification of the catholic church. Christ hath not appointed his ministers to look unto themselves only; they are to be the means of calling and gathering the elect in all ages: and this they principally are to do by their ministry. I confess there are other outward ways and means whereby men have been, and may be converted. I find by long observation, that common light, in conjunction with afflictions, do begin the conversion of many, without this or that special word: and persons may be converted to God by religious conference. There may be many occasional conversions wrought by the instrumentality of men, who have real spiritual gifts for the dispensation of the word, and are occasionally called thereunto. But principally this work is committed unto the pastors of churches, for the conversion of souls. Take this observation, the first object of the word is the world. Our work is the same with the apostles, the method directly contrary; the apostles had a work committed to them, and this was their method: the first work committed to the apostles was the convincing and converting sinners to Christ among Jews and Gentiles; to preach the gospel, to convert infidels; this they accounted their chief work. Paul made nothing of administering the ordinance of baptism, in comparison of it. 'Christ did not send me,' saith he, 'to baptize, but to preach the gospel;' 1 Cor. i. 17. In comparison, I say, preaching was their chief work. And then, their second work was to teach these disciples to do and observe whatever Christ commanded them, and to bring them into church order; this was their method. Now the same work is committed unto the pastors of churches, but in a contrary method. The first object of our ministry is the church; to build up and edify the church. But what then? Is the other part of the work taken away, that they should not preach to convert souls? God forbid. There be several ways whereby they who are pastors of churches do preach to the conversion of souls. 1. When other persons that are unconverted do come where they are preaching to their own congregations (whereof we have experience every day), they are there converted to God by the pastoral discharge of their duty. No, say some, they preach

to the church as ministers, to others only as spiritually gifted. But no man can make this distinction in his own conscience. Suppose there be five hundred in this place, and a hundred of this church; can you make the distinction, that I am preaching in a double capacity, to some as a minister, and to others not as a minister? Neither rule, nor reason, nor natural light expresses any thing to that purpose. We preach as ministers to those to whom we preach, for the conversion of their souls. 2. Ministers may preach for the conversion of souls, when they preach elsewhere occasionally. They preach as ministers wherever they preach. I know the indelible character is a figment; but the pastor's office is not such a thing as men may leave at home when they go abroad. It is not in a minister's own power, unless lawfully dismissed or deposed, to hinder him from preaching as a minister. And it is the duty of particular churches (one end of their institution being the calling and gathering the catholic church), to part with their officers for a season, when called to preach in other places for the converting souls to Christ. We had a glorious ministry in the last age; wonderful instruments for the conversion of souls. Did they convert them as gifted men, and not as ministers? God forbid. I say, it may be done by them who have received gifts, and not called to office. But I know no ground any man hath to give up himself to the constant exercise of ministerial gifts; and not say to the Lord in prayer, 'Lord, here am I, send me.'

Had I time and strength, I should tell you of the duty of pastors and teachers in administering of the seals; and what is required thereunto.

And their duty in directing and comforting the consciences of all sorts of believers. What prudence, purity, condescension and patience are required in it, as a great part of our ministerial duty.

I should shew you also their duty in the rule of the church. Not that ever Christ intended to commit the rule of the church to them alone, to take them off from that great and important duty of preaching the gospel; but as time and occasions will allow them, to attend to the rule of the church.

And lastly, in exemplary conversation; and in assembling with other churches of their order, for the managing church communion.

'Who is sufficient for these things?' Pray, pray for us; and God strengthen us, and our brother, who hath been called this day to the work; it may not be unuseful to him and me, to be mindful of these things, and to beg the assistance of our brethren.

SERMON VI.*

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil: A Song of loves.

***My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer, &c.*—PSAL. xlv. 1—3.**

THE whole book of Psalms hath a peculiar respect unto Jesus Christ, either directly, or in the person of David, who was his greatest personal type, next to Aaron and Melchisedec. But there are some psalms that are altogether directly prophetical of him, and of his offices, viz. the second psalm is prophetical of his kingdom; the sixteenth psalm, of the work of his mediation, and obedience to God therein; the twenty-second, of his priestly office, his sufferings, death, his resurrection and intercession; the fortieth, of his oblation and suffering; the seventy-second, of his kingly and prophetical power and glorious regard unto his people; the sixty-eighth, of his glorious exaltation; and this forty-fifth psalm is a prophecy and description of his person, and his kingly office, and of the espousals of him and his church.

The title of the psalm is, 'To the chief musician upon Shoshannim for the sons of Korah, Maschil: A Song of loves.'

'To the chief musician;' so למנצח is generally rendered, to him that excels: as נצח signifies 'eternal,' I have sometimes thought it might be as well rendered, 'In perpetuam rei memoriam,' 'For an everlasting remembrance.' But we may take it in the common acceptation, that it was recommended unto him that did preside over the rest of the Levites in the worship of God in the temple, by singing on instruments of music.

'Upon Shoshannim.' The word signifies 'lilies;' whether it was a musical instrument, or a certain tune, we know not, neither do the Jews.

* This sermon was preached June 7, 1674, at Stadham.

'For the sons of Korah;' who these were, we may see, 1 Chron. ix. 19. 'The Korahites were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle,' &c. What were they else? ver. 33. 'These are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who, remaining in the chambers, were free;' for they were employed in the work of singing the praises of God with instruments of music, day and night.

David was the first who brought musical instruments into the solemn worship of God: not but that they did occasionally make use of timbrels and cymbals, in the praises of God before; but he was the first that brought in a great number of musical instruments into the worship of God. And he speaks expressly in 1 Chron. xxiii. 5. of praising God with instruments of music, 'which,' says he, 'I made.' He did it by the direction of the Spirit of God; otherwise he ought not to have done it: for so it is said, 1 Chron. xxviii. 12. When he had established all the ordinances of the temple, 'the pattern which he had of all by the Spirit.' And ver. 19. 'All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing, even all the works of this pattern.' It was all revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, without which he could have introduced nothing at all into the worship of God. The Lord prepared him for this service while he was a shepherd; at which time he had attained great skill in singing on musical instruments.

And I cannot but observe, by the way, that it is a great mercy when God will engage the natural faculties and abilities of men, especially wherein they are excellent, in any way of his service. David had got an excellency in this faculty, and God engages it in his service. As those that had skill therein, and were not so engaged, are condemned in the prophet Amos, vi. 5. What were they condemned for? Why, that they would invent instruments of music like David. David did it to serve the Lord, and they did it to serve their lusts. Where men have any peculiar faculty or ability, it is an unspeakable mercy to have it engaged for God; for otherwise it will certainly be engaged for the devil: and, to render the mercy more singular, I think it is evident, the devil hath got the use and advantage of natural faculties and abilities, above what is given up to God.

Again, this was David's special inclination; whence he is called 'the sweet psalmist of Israel;' the edge of his spirit lay to it. And we may observe, that it is an excellent mercy, when the edge of our spirits, in special inclination, is engaged for the service of God. Prov. xxvii. 17. 'As iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.' Every man hath an edge; and there are several ways whereby it is sharpened. There is no man but cuts one way or other; and company and society is the great means whereby the edge is sharpened. One cuts to the world, another to pleasures, to lusts; and such company makes him more sharp. It is well when the edge of a man's spirit is set for the things of God, and he has some to sharpen that edge; for that way that a man's edge is set, that way is he. He may do something in the worship of God; but if his edge be to the world, that way is he; and if his edge be to lust and pleasure, that way is he. Now here was David; the special inclination and edge of his spirit was set towards God, and so was employed of God.

There is a general title given to this psalm, 'Maschil;' that is, a song to make wise, or to give instruction. They are the things of Christ, that, in an especial manner, are suited to give instruction to the church of God.

The special matter of the psalm is, 'A Song of loves.'

And why is it called 'loves?'

It may be upon three accounts. 1. Because the psalm mentions a mutual and interchangeable love. It is not only of the love of Christ to his church, nor only of the love of the church unto Christ; but is mutual, of the love of Christ to the church, and of the church to Christ, so that it is a song of loves. 2. It may be put in the plural number, by way of eminency, which is frequent in the Hebrew; of loves, that is, of the most excellent love, such, as none other is to be compared unto it. 3. It may be called so, because of the manifold fruits of that one single love, that is between Christ and his church. Though it be but a single love on each hand, yet various are the fruits of it; which will be described in the next verse.

I principally look upon it to be called so in the second sense, because it is more eminent than any other love in the

world; the mystical, spiritual love that is between Christ and the church, is the most excellent love.

It is a 'Song of loves.' I shall not speak unto you of the nature of songs. 'Let him that is merry,' saith James, chap. v. 13. (or in a rejoicing, cheerful frame of heart and spirit) 'sing psalms.' So that singing was a means appointed of God, whereby men should express their joy in a way of thankfulness.

Thus this title of the psalms will yield us these two observations.

I. That the espousals of Christ and his church, or the mutual love that is between Christ and his church, is a subject matter for a song of great joy.

II. It is not a song of love, but it is a song of loves; I observe from thence, that there is no love like the love of Christ to his church in the day of espousals, and to every believing soul; it hath an eminency in it above all other love whatever.

I. This love of Christ and the church in their espousals, is matter of great joy and rejoicing.

1. It is so to God himself. He expresses the frame of his heart therein, Zeph. iii. 17. 'He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.' The union of Christ and a believer (for it is spoken of there), is a matter of unspeakable joy to God himself. Not that God is subject to the like affections with us; but he expresses it to the height in Jer. xxxii. 41. that we may know how the heart of God approves it, 'He rejoices over his people to do them good, with his whole heart, and with his whole soul;' so that it is a song of loves to God himself: also in Isa. lxii. 4, 5. 'The Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' Many other places might be given to this purpose.

2. It is matter of joy to Jesus Christ. Cant. iii. 11. 'Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.' This Solomon was a type of Christ; and the

mother of Christ, that brought forth Christ as to his human nature, was the church: and in the espousals of the church to Christ, set a crown upon his head; see Psal. xvi. 6. 'The lines,' saith Christ, in reference to his church, 'are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage;' it is the approbation that Christ gives of his church, when he is espoused unto it, in the day of the gladness of his heart.

3. It is matter of joy to believers themselves; 1 Pet. i. 8. 'In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' It is, I say, matter of joy and praise unto them.

Why are the loves of Christ and his church, or the espousals of Christ and a believing soul, matter of such joy, as to be the subject of a song of loves to God himself, to Jesus Christ, and to believers?

(1.) Because on the part of God, it is that wherein the glorious design and purpose of his grace is accomplished, and his goodness satisfied. 'God doth all things for the praise of the glory of his grace;' Eph. i. 6. Wherefore, when this grace of God is accomplished, and his goodness satisfied, it is matter of rejoicing unto God. When he had laid the foundation of the old creation, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, God himself looked upon all, and behold it was very good; he approved his whole work: and when he carried on the work of the new creation, whereof this I am speaking of is the greatest instance, even the espousal loves between Christ and a believing soul, having accomplished such a work of grace and power and goodness as this is, God himself doth approve of it; it is matter of joy unto him.

(2.) It is matter of joy to Jesus Christ, because 'he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.' This is that he laboured for, Isa. liii. 8, &c. It was matter of joy to Jacob, when he had obtained Rachel to be his wife, that he had got that he laboured for; 'he served for a wife,' saith the Holy Ghost, Hos. xii. 12. Why, the Lord Jesus Christ, when he hath united his church to himself, and in proportion any believing soul, he hath that which he hath laboured for. He sees of the travail of his soul; it cost him prayers and tears, blood and death; but now he sees what it is come unto; it

hath produced this bride for him, or believing souls to be united to him, and he is satisfied; he fulfilled a hard service, but it was for his bride, in whom his soul delighted, as he does in every believing soul, when he hath made them comely through his comeliness, or, in and through the righteousness he puts upon them.

(3.) It is certainly matter of joy to all believers' themselves, because it instates them in those new relations, and in that condition, which they, for their part, never ought to have expected, or looked for, as to any thing that was in themselves. And therefore the prophet Isaiah, chap. liv. 5. calls upon the church to rejoice exceedingly, because 'thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall he be called.' All grace and privilege, all mercy, pardon, every thing else we enjoy in this world, and hope for in another, depends upon this, of relation unto Jesus Christ; therefore certainly it is matter of joy and rejoicing to believers.

That which we may learn from hence, by way of use, is,

1. The infinite wisdom, goodness, and condescension of God in disposing the way of saving poor sinners, so as that it shall be matter of joy and rejoicing to him, to Jesus Christ, and to believers themselves. It was infinite wisdom and grace that God would dispose any way for the salvation of his creatures. He gave out a way to Adam, whereby (by perfect obedience) he might have attained life, immortality, and glory. That was not a way that did issue in such great joy to God, to Christ, or to ourselves, as this doth, where God is glorified, Christ satisfied, and believers themselves are surprised. We were poor, desolate, forlorn, lost creatures; and that God should bring us into a way of saving us, so as that the heart of God and Christ, and our own hearts should rejoice in it; this calls for our admiration. I know it is hard for us to believe it; yet I know it is true, that God himself is rejoiced, and Christ rejoices in the taking of any one soul into espousals with himself. And which may add more, all the angels in heaven rejoice too; Luke xv. 10. 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents,' because God

is so glorified, and Christ so exalted. God hath put this way of converting and saving sinners into such a channel, as will tend to his glory, and the glory of Christ, and so be matter of joy unto them.

2. Let us inquire, whether we have found, or do find this joy in our own hearts. Is the remembrance of the closing of our hearts with Christ, a song of loves unto us? Truly, if our loves be earnest and intent upon other things, we find joy and refreshment in them; but are we not dead, and cold to the thoughts of this great and excellent advantage of being espoused to Christ, as all believers are? if so, it is but a sad evidence we are so truly espoused. Alas! If a poor beggar, a deformed creature, should be taken into the espousals of a great prince, would she not be sensible of it? We are poor, deformed, woful, sinful, polluted creatures, and for us to be taken into this relation with Jesus Christ; where are our hearts? Why do not we rejoice in the Lord with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Is it not because Christ hath not our whole hearts? because we are not so entirely with him, and for him in our affections as becomes this relation? because the world hath too much hold upon us? Shall God rejoice, and Christ rejoice? Shall it be a song of loves to God and Christ, that we are brought into this relation? and these dull hearts of ours be no farther affected with it? We ought to be ashamed to think how little we are concerned in this so great a privilege; how little lifted up above the world, and alienated from the world; if indeed we are partakers of this mercy.

II. The second observation from its being a song of loves, is this, That there is no love like to the love between Christ and the souls of believers. There are flaming loves in some to their lusts; in others to the world, that even devour them; but yet I will say again, upon ten thousand accounts, there is no love like to the love between Christ and the souls of believers.

Should we go to speak now of the love of Christ, on the one side, it is an ocean, we cannot fathom it. The best act of our souls towards Christ's love is admiration, astonishing admiration, till the heart is quite overwhelmed with it, till our thoughts and understandings are, as it were, lost; the soul is taken out of itself, and laid in the dust as nothing, to

be swallowed up in a holy contemplation of the unspeakable, inconceiveable love of Jesus Christ.

I will name three heads of it, that may help us in this admiration, to see that it is a love that is inimitable: the fiery loves of men after this world, and their lusts, are not to be named the same day with it.

1. Consider it in its condescension. Now, I think, we shall all confess that this love is inimitable, because nothing but infinite, divine power, and wisdom could work such an effect as was the condescension of the Son of God; out of his love to take our nature upon him, to become flesh as we are; and God never wrought it, nor will, but in that instance, to all eternity. And therefore this love hath the pre-eminence above all other loves whatsoever. In Phil. ii. 6—8. it is there set forth, where he unites those things that are set at an infinite distance of being. He stoops so low, that he saith, Psal. xxii. 6. 'I am a worm, and no man;' he comes to the lowest condition mankind can be reduced unto in this condescension; and surely this hath a pre-eminence above all other loves whatsoever.

2. The love of Christ was manifested in his suffering in that condition. You know what he suffered, and what he suffered for; he suffered to bear the guilt of our sins, so to take away the wrath of God; he suffered to wash away the filth of our sins, so to take away shame and confusion from our souls; he suffered to redeem us from the world, poor captive creatures as we were, that we might be his own; and therefore God gives us the type of it in the prophet Hosea, chap. iii. by a harlot; and Christ bought us when we were harlots with the world (our hearts going after sin and Satan), that we might be his property. He suffered for us so as to bear the guilt of our iniquities, that there may be no wrath from God upon us; I will pay, saith Christ, what I never took away. 'For a good man it is possible, some would even dare to die;' Rom. v. 7. but saith he, here is love, Christ died for us when we were sinners, when we were enemies. 'He loved us, and washed us in his own blood,' that we may be purified from the filth of our sins; he loved us, and redeemed us out of every kindred and nation in the world. Here lay all misery, the guilt of sin that rendered us obnoxious to the curse of God, and the filth of sin that made

us odious to God, and kept us under the power of the world. This love hath suffered on purpose to redeem us from all this.

3. The care and tenderness which the Lord Jesus Christ continues to manifest towards us, now he is in heaven, while we are upon the earth, is another fruit of this love; Heb. v. 2. This high priest knows how to 'have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out the of way.' Chap. iv. 15. 'He hath been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and in all points tempted like as we;' and 'he lives for ever to make intercession for us.' In these things he expresses his love to, and care for, his people.

On the other side, I say, the love of believers to Christ is inexpressible, or beyond all other love whatsoever.

1. In a way of value, Matt. xiii. 45. When the merchantman had found the precious pearl, he sells all he hath to buy it. Believers will part with all they have, to obtain Christ; for they prefer him above all. What will they not part with, and what do they not part with, and deny for Christ? whereby you may see it is a love that is transcendent to all other loves.

(1.) They part with their sin, lust, and corruption. There is not a believer in the world, but hath naturally as great a love of, and adherence to, sin, lust, and corruption, as the highest debauched person upon the face of the earth. But a believer will part with them all, subdue them all, so that he might win Christ, which manifests it to be a transcendent love; and they that will not do this, are not believers. If our hearts are not engaged to the mortifying of all sin, lust, and corruption, as he enables us, we are not married to Christ, for 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;' Gal. v. 24.

(2.) They will part with their righteousness for Christ. This was that the Jews would not give up, that they might obtain justification. They had a righteousness which was according to the law; and, saith the apostle, Rom. x. 3. 'They will not submit to the righteousness of God, but go about to establish their own righteousness.' All the righteousness which is in the world, that the men of the world value before Christ, while they are engaged in their lusts and pleasures, they will not part with it for Christ. Yea, even

when they are wrought off their lusts and pleasures by conviction to some duties, yet they will not part with their own righteousness for Christ. But believers will part with theirs, and count it all as loss and dung.

If corruption be subdued, and righteousness be given up, what remains? Truly,

(3.) Self remains. If a man denies not himself in lawful things, in any thing that will hinder his walking with God, and living unto God, which will make him unfaithful in his place, or unfruitful to please God, he is not worthy of him. If he cannot deny his ease, liberty, peace, profit, or pleasure, he is not worthy of Jesus Christ. Now that love, which will carry a man out to deny all ungodliness and lust, to renounce all his own righteousness, to lose all he hath wrought in his own strength, to deny himself upon every instance wherein Christ requires him; this is a transcendent love, above all other love whatsoever.

2. The love of believers manifests itself also in suffering for Christ; and O who can tell what the martyrs endured from love to the Lord Jesus?

So that this psalm which treats of the espousals of Christ, and believers, may well have this title, 'A Song of loves;' it being the most excellent love.

Two things from hence are incumbent upon us.

First, to labour to get a sense of this love of Christ upon our hearts. If we are believers, all this love of Christ, who is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' is fixed upon every one of our souls; and it is our great duty to labour to let in a sense of this love of Christ into them. Out of his abundant love and grace, and for no other reason in the world, he loved us when we were strangers, he reconciled us to himself when we were enemies, and engaged in enmity against him; give him then the glory of his sovereign grace, with respect to your own souls. And,

Secondly, Let us examine ourselves whether we have this transcendent love to Jesus Christ in our hearts. If we have, it will continually keep us up to the mortification of lust and corruption, to the renouncing of all self-righteousness, to the denying ourselves; and it will make us continually ready for all the service and suffering Christ shall call us unto.

SERMON VII.*

My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.—Psal. xlv. 1—3.

THIS psalm hath three parts, the title of it is, 'A Song of loves;' which I have already spoken unto. The preface of it in the first verse. And the song itself from the second verse to the end.

The first verse contains a preface to this song of loves. 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.'

I shall offer a few things from these words.

Observe in general, that he that lays a good foundation, makes a good beginning of what he hath to say. It is from his heart; 'My heart,' saith he, 'is inditing.' If things do not begin at the heart, whatsoever we do about spiritual things, they are of no value, of no use. We may perform duties, we may pray and preach, and hear; but if these things do not spring from the heart, that is, from faith, and love, and delight working in the heart, all is lost. A sacrifice without a heart, a silly dove that has no heart, are things God abhors; Hos. vii. 11.

The heart of the psalmist was in this matter; and if our heart be in it, it will be a duty, in our measure and proportion, good and acceptable with God, as it was with him.

There are in the verse two things. I. The subject matter treated of in this song of loves. II. The manner of expressing it.

I. The subject treated of. 1. In general, that it is a good matter. It is not a song about vain empty things; much less about wicked and sinful things, as the songs of the world are; neither is it only about things that are true, but

* This sermon was preached at Stadham, June 7, 1674.

have no goodness in them; but, saith he, my heart is inditing a good matter.

2. What this good matter is, is declared, 'I speak of the things which I have made touching the king.' The subject, saith he, of this song of mine, is the king; it is no ordinary person. It was the name whereby they called the Messiah, 'Christ the Lord,' under the Old Testament, who is indeed 'the Lord of lords, and King of kings.' 'I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion;' Psal. ii. 6. He was principally prophesied of as a prince, a ruler, a captain, being to deliver the people of God. He is the subject of the song. And it is limited to things touching or concerning him; as if he had said, it is not for me, it is not for any mortal man to conceive or express all the glories and excellencies of the great King, Jesus Christ; but, saith he, something touching, something concerning him.

The best we can reach or attain unto in this world, is only something touching Christ. We cannot yet behold the King in his glory, we cannot see his uncreated excellencies or beauties, nor those unspeakable glories of his person, natures, and works, as we shall one day contemplate and behold.

'I speak,' saith he, 'of the things I have made;' that is, which I have prepared; I will mention only the things which I have composed concerning Christ.

So that the subject of this song, is in general, a good matter; in particular, things touching Christ, and such things as the psalmist, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, had composed.

II. There is the manner of their delivery, both as to their conception, and as to outward expression; their conception, it was in his heart; as to the outward delivery, it was by his tongue. And there is a peculiarity in both. It is not an ordinary conception of the heart, it is not a common expression of the tongue. If you will look into the margin of your bibles, you will find, that what we have rendered here, 'inditing,' in the original, signifies 'boiling' or 'bubbling up.' The word refers to the bubbling up of water in a fountain or spring. The heart of the psalmist was so full of these things of Christ, things touching the King, that they did naturally overflow, as water rising out of a spring na-

turally flows into the stream, without any labour or difficulty. It was no hard thing to him to speak of things of Christ, his heart was full of them. O, that it was thus with us! It is promised, it shall be so, in John iv. 14. Christ hath promised to give his people his Spirit, that shall be as a well of water in them, springing up to everlasting life.

My tongue, saith he, shall not only express it, but in a peculiar manner, 'my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.'

A ready writer, one speedy, steady, able to set down any thought, or conception whatsoever. When we deal about the things of Christ, there is a peculiar manner required both in the conception of the heart, and in the expression of the tongue.

Thus I have given you the sense of the words; and I shall now name some observations from them.

First, That the things which concern Jesus Christ, are a good matter to believers. They are not only true, so as the mind may assent unto them, and never be deceived; but they have that in them which is the object of the soul's delight and valuation, and which the soul of a believer cleaves unto. The truth of it is, here lies the great difference between sincere believers, and mere hypocrites. Hypocrites assent unto the doctrine of the gospel, things touching the King, as true, but they never embrace them as good; their hearts and affections do not cleave unto them, as finding a real sweetness, excellency, and suitableness unto their wants in them; for no man esteems that to be good, which is not suitable unto him.

Jesus Christ, and the things of Christ, are a good matter unto believers; for,

1. They are very excellent in themselves. Col. i. 18. 'He hath in all things the pre-eminence.' Whatsoever is good in any kind, it all centres in Christ. And what is in him is better than that which was in the state of nature; better than what was in the law; better than what is in self-righteousness; better than life itself: so that from their own nature, they are good things. Give me leave to say, they are good things, because they are God's best things. As to temporal good things, take a king, or a potentate, his best things are peculiar treasures, gold and silver, and precious stones: but the things which concern Christ, are the best

things of the kingdom of heaven. The things which concern God's only begotten Son, and which concern all the wisdom, grace, love, and power, the holy God will exercise in the greatest work he ever set his hand to; surely they are good things. When the psalmist saith it is a good matter, his meaning is, it is the best matter in the world.

2. They are a good matter to believers, because they have received the Spirit whereby they are able to discern the excellency of them. As to others, it is said, 'He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;' Isa. liii. 2. Can we see no goodness, no excellency in Christ, in the grace of Christ, in his ways, in his people, why he should be desired? Believers can; 1 Cor. ii. 7—10. The Spirit of God discovers to them the excellent things of Christ, whereby they find them to be good; when as to strangers from Christ they seem absurd, and foolish things, and no way to be desired. Men of carnal wisdom, that have attained to the highest pitch of reason, and ability in the world, they can see neither form nor comeliness in Christ, nor the things of Christ: but, when God opens the things of Christ by the Spirit, then they see that there is a goodness, and an excellency in them.

By way of use. Seeing the things of Christ are good things in themselves, and believers discern their goodness, and their excellency; we may do well then to inquire, whether the things of Christ are good things to us? Then they are good things to us, when we desire them above all other things whatsoever. Phil. iii. 8. 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' He could make use of those things he had; but in comparison, his heart did really esteem them all as loss and dung, when they stood in competition with Christ. And pray let us consider, how the psalmist hath here stated it; saith he, My heart indites, and my tongue professes. It is easy to profess, that the things of Christ are good things, and that we esteem all other things as loss and dung; but do our hearts so esteem them? otherwise we come short of what is here intended by the psalmist. Do our hearts really value the good things of Christ? Things concerning the glory of

his person; his love to his church; the excellency of his kingdom, and his rule; the things here treated of? The glory of his person, 'Fairer than the children of men;' the glory of his kingdom, 'in thy majesty, ride prosperously; thy throne O God is for ever and ever:' and his love to his church, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.' Do we value these things, I say, in our very hearts, so as to esteem all other things as loss and dung, that we could freely forego them? Do we find satisfaction in the things of Christ, with and without all other things? With other things? It is the will of God, while he intrusts us with other things, that we should use them to his glory. But is our satisfaction in the good things of Christ so high, that we can be satisfied without other things? Truly I hope the Lord will help us, that if we come to lose all things for the good things of Christ (and how soon we may come to such a time we know not), we may do it cheerfully and willingly. This I can say, that the nearer some have been to the losing of all things, even life itself, the better Christ hath been unto them. And I would pray for you, that if God should reserve us for such a time, as to deprive us of all other things, that this may grow upon our hearts, that the things of Christ are better than ever you apprehended. This will carry us through all our darkness and trouble; to be satisfied with them, in the want of other things. And take it for your comfort, though you may tremble now at the parting with a hair of your head, as if it was the garment from your back; yet, if you are sincere believers, when you come to part with all, you will do it cheerfully. Christ will come in, and enable you so to do. Examine therefore yourselves, whether you do not only give a naked assent to the gospel, and the things of Christ; or whether you find a goodness in them, a suitableness and satisfaction in them; that it is a good matter unto you.

Secondly, Observe from the words, that it is the duty of believers to be making things concerning Jesus Christ. 'Things that I have made touching the king.' Now, to be making things concerning Jesus Christ, is to meditate upon them, to have firm and fixed meditations upon Christ, and upon the glory of his excellencies: this is it that here is

called, 'The things I have made,' composed, framed in my mind. He did not make pictures of Christ, or frame such and such images of him; but he meditated upon Christ. It is called 'beholding the glory of the Lord in a glass,' in 2 Cor. iii. 18. What is the glory of the Lord? Why, it is the glory of his person; the glory of his kingdom; the glory of his love. Where are these to be seen? They are all represented in the glass; what glass? the glass of the gospel. The gospel hath a reflection upon it, of all these glories of Christ, and makes a representation of them unto us. What is our work and business? Why, it is to behold this glory, that is, to contemplate upon it by faith, to meditate upon it, which is here called making 'things touching the king.' This is also called 'Christ's dwelling in us,' Eph. iii. 17. and 'the word of Christ dwelling richly in us,' Col. iii. 16. which is, when the soul abounds in thoughts of Christ. I have had more advantage by private thoughts of Christ, than by any thing in this world; and I think, when a soul hath satisfying and exalting thoughts of Christ himself, his person, and his glory, it is the way whereby Christ dwells in such a soul. If I have observed any thing by experience, it is this, a man may take the measure of his growth, and decay in grace, according to his thoughts and meditations upon the person of Christ, and the glory of Christ's kingdom, and of his love. A heart that is inclined to converse with Christ, as he is represented in the gospel, is a thriving heart; and if estranged from it, and backward to it, it is under deadness and decays.

'Touching the king.' The psalmist hath respect unto Christ as a king. Hence,

Thirdly, Observe that there is a peculiar glory in the kingly office of Jesus Christ, that we should daily exercise our thoughts about. The comfort, joy, and refreshment of believers in this world, lies in the kingly power of Christ. What a view is there taken of him, in Isa. lxiii. 1. 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save;' and which refers us to but one part of his kingly office, viz. to the power he will put forth in destroying his enemies. It is generally thought that Edom,

under the Old Testament, shadows forth Rome under the New: this is a glorious description of Christ going forth in the greatness of his power, when the year of his redeemed is come, and the day of vengeance is in his heart. How dreadful will it be to the world! how glorious in the eyes of believers! when we shall see him glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, till he hath destroyed all his stubborn adversaries.

There is a peculiar glory in the kingdom of Christ, that we ought much for our relief to meditate upon. If we could behold the internal, and external workings of Christ; what he hath done, what he will do, how that certainly he will save every believer, how that certainly he will destroy every enemy, how infallible in his grace, and never failing in his vengeance; we should then see a peculiar glory in his kingdom.

Fourthly, Observe, that when a heart is full of love to Christ, it will run over; then men will be speaking of Christ, and of his glory. 'We believe,' saith the apostle, 'and therefore we speak;' 2 Cor. iv. 13. If we do believe, we shall speak: and, saith the apostle, Acts iv. 20. 'When they said, Speak no more in this name,' saith he, 'We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard;' we cannot but speak them. On the contrary, there is sad evidence, how little there is of love in the hearts of men towards Christ. Alas! look about to the multitudes of them that are called Christians, when do you hear a word of him? When do you meet with a heart overflowing with love to Christ? Some speak of him to blaspheme him; some to the reproach of him; but for a natural readiness to speak for him, where do we find it? Yet if the heart be filled, it will boil over. There are some that pass for professors; you shall very seldom hear a word of Christ from them. If a man would make himself a reproach in the world, he cannot better do it, than by owning Christ and his Spirit before men.

Fifthly, and lastly, That profession alone is acceptable to God, and useful in the church, which proceeds from the fulness of the heart. It is to no purpose to have our tongue as the pen of a ready writer, if our hearts be not full. It must come from the boiling or meditation of our hearts, if our profession be good and acceptable.

This is the preface of the song.

SERMON VIII.*

Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.—Psal. xlv. 2.

I HAVE given you an account of the general design and scope of this psalm already; and spoken something from the title of it, 'To the chief musician,' &c. And opened the first verse, and spoken something to that also; which is the preface to the whole psalm.

I shall now speak something to you from the second verse.

'Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.'

You know who it is that is intended in these words, namely, 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' the King the Messiah; and this is a description of him, which the psalmist gives in prophecy.

There are three parts of the verse:

I. A description of Christ's person; 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.'

II. An account of his endowments, that were bestowed upon him, to enable him to his work; 'grace is poured into thy lips.'

III. God's acceptance and approbation of him in his work; 'Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.'

I. Here is a description of Christ's person; 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.'

You may consider it, 1. Absolutely, that Christ is fair. 2. Comparatively, that he is fairer than the children of men.

1. Absolutely, Christ is fair. He ascribes beauty to him. There is mention of the beauty of God in Psal. xxvii. 4. 'To behold the beauty of the Lord: that may concern his worship. But it is directly spoken of God himself, in Zech. ix. 17. 'How great is his goodness, and how

* This sermon was preached at Stadham, June 14, 1674.

great is his beauty!' As beauty among men consists in the symmetry of parts; so in God, it is the harmony of all the divine perfections. The infinite harmony, agreeableness, suitableness of all divine perfections, I say, is this beauty. Christ is called fair, to denote his glorious perfections.

2. Comparatively; 'Thou art fairer than the children of men;' that is, (1.) than all worldly men. There is more excellency, more desirableness in Jesus Christ, than in all the men of the world. (2.) More than in all those who were employed in the church, which is peculiarly here intended. More excellent than Moses and Aaron; than any of the kings and prophets of old, who yet were so desirable. Aaron had his garments made for beauty, and for glory. But, saith he, Christ is more beautiful, more fair, than any of the children of men.

I told you, the design of the psalm was to speak of the kingdom of Christ, and to set forth the mutual love that is between Christ and his church. But yet, in the first place, he lays down this description of his person, as the foundation, 'thou art fairer than the children of men.'

I say, 1. Absolutely, Christ is fair, and we may observe from hence, that, in the consideration of Jesus Christ, if we intend any interest in him, and any benefit by him, the first thing we ought to know, and consider, is his person. So the psalmist here, when he had designed the description of his kingdom, and benefits, he begins with his person. And if we know not the person of Christ, we have no interest in him. The apostle, in Phil. iii. 10. shews what our design should be, 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,' &c. first, know him, says he, before he speaks of the benefits of his mediation, which is consequential to the knowledge of himself. So he tells you of the subject of his preaching; 1 Cor. ii. 2. 'I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;' first, Christ, and then, him crucified; first, his person, and then his mediation.

The reasons are,

(1.) Because Jesus Christ will be loved and preferred above all 'for his own sake.' He tells his disciples, Matt. x. 37. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is

not worthy of me.' If we intend to have any benefit by him, he must be valued above all, for his own sake, or, for the sake of what he is in himself. He puts it as a mark upon them that followed him, 'because of the loaves;' John vi. 26. And if without the knowledge of Christ, without a due consideration of his person, we think to follow him only for his benefits, for the advantage which we hope to have by him, which is to follow him for the loaves, we shall be found strangers to him, when we think we are in a better state and condition.

(2.) Without this, no man can secure his love and faith from being selfish, or from beginning and ending in self. For if we regard only those things whereof we have advantage, so that we may have our sin pardoned, our iniquities done away, and our souls saved, we would not care whether there were a Christ to trust in or no. But as this tends not to the glory of God, so neither will it tend to the advantage of our own souls. So that if we intend any interest in Christ, we must begin with his person, and the knowledge of it; 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.'

The use of this point is,

First, To shew how few real Christians there be in the world; seeing there are so few that have an acquaintance with, and a love unto, the person of Christ. Some deny him. We have a generation among ourselves that pretend to be Christians, I mean the Quakers, who deny the person of Christ, leave him neither the perfection of the Deity, nor humanity, nor the union of his natures; and have framed to themselves a religion without Christ; a carcase without a soul, or life to quicken it, or enable it to be of any use. And there are others, that evidence how little it is they value Christ, 1 Cor. ii. 8. 'Had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' Do we think, if men knew Christ, whatsoever they pretend, they would so despise his ways, his ordinances, his worship? prefer their own inventions and imaginations before them, and prosecute and persecute all that truly fear him, according to the power of their hand? Had they known him, they would not have done so. And the greatest part are perfectly sottish, brutishly ignorant concerning the person of Christ; yea, many to whom he hath been preached, it is to them like the wind, they hear a sound,

but know not whence it comes, or what it means; perhaps they never had one serious thought in all their lives what Christ is, or who he is? wherein his excellencies do consist? or what they expect from him? O how few labour to have a familiar intercourse with this Saviour? How few say to wisdom, 'Thou art my sister, and call understanding their kinswoman,' as in Prov. vii. 4. speaking of Christ, who is the wisdom of God. They that know Christ, will make him as near and familiar to their souls as they can.

Secondly, This shews, what great cause they have to rejoice, unto whom God hath revealed Christ. Matt. xvi. 13, &c. 'Whom do men say I am,' saith Christ to his disciples? 'And they said, Some say thou art John the baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' The world has very dark notions concerning Christ, like the blind man, that saw men like trees walking: but as for those who have the knowledge of Christ, they are blessed, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it. It is the greatest spiritual revelation, and the greatest evidence that we have received any spiritual revelation from God, when we know the person of Christ. Let us be thankful for any revelation God hath made of Christ unto our souls, that we behold his person, and know him, that he is not a stranger unto us, but that our souls have some holy acquaintance with him.

And if God hath thus revealed Christ unto us, Let us be manifesting to all the world, that we are Christ's, when others are ashamed of him. How? By our prizing, valuing, preferring him above all other things, above the world, and all the satisfactions and enjoyments of the world, above its ways, pleasures, converse: we have better satisfaction, better acquaintance to converse with, and retire unto.

2. Observe from the words, that in the knowledge of Christ, what we should chiefly consider, are the things wherein he is fairer than the children of men, wherein he is more excellent, and to be preferred above all other persons and things whatsoever.

Now, wherein is Christ fairer than the children of men? I answer, in three things, (1). In the dignity of his person. (2.) In the excellency of his work. And, (3.) In the power and heavenliness of his doctrine. Many other instances may be given, but things may be gathered to these three heads, whereby we may make answer unto the question, that is tacitly asked of us by nominal professors in the world, which was asked of the spouse, by the daughters of Jerusalem, Cant. v. 9. 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved?' What is there in Christ more than in other persons and things, that there is such a stir made about him? I say, 'he is fairer than the children of men;'

(1.) In the dignity of his person. He is a more excellent person. Wherein consists the excellency of Christ's person? Truly not at all in the outward appearance of his human nature, especially while here in the world. It is the foundation of all devotion among some, the making of glorious pictures of Christ, by which means to represent him fine and glorious. But what doth he speak of himself in Psal. xxii. 6. 'I am a worm and no man.' He was brought to that low condition, that he was of no esteem, of no reputation. But if we could have had a sight of him, how comely would he have been? Why, 'he had neither form nor comeliness' in his outward appearance; 'that when we should see him we should desire him,' Isa. liii. 2. Wherein then consists the dignity of his person? In two things, [1.] In the glory of his divine nature. [2.] In the immeasurable fulness of his human nature with grace.

[1.] In his divine glory, Phil. ii. 6. 'Who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.' Here is his glory. Also in John i. 14. 'We behold his glory.' Wherein consists that glory? 'The glory of the only begotten of the Father.'

If you ask us, 'What is our beloved more than another beloved?' What is there in Christ, that our souls are sick of love for him, breathe and pant after the enjoyment of him, and that continually? It is because we have seen his glory, who is God blessed for ever.

[2.] It consists in the immeasurable, unspeakable fulness of grace that was given to his human nature. It is what I [illegible] as much thought of as any one thing, concerning the

immeasurable fulness of grace which is in the human nature of Christ. So saith the apostle, John iii. 34. 'That God gave not the Spirit unto him by measure.' How by measure? 'To every one of us is grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ;' Eph. iv. 7. We have every one of us a measure; but it is given to him without a measure. There is an immeasurable fulness of grace in the human nature of Christ, which we are partakers of; 'for of his fulness we all receive and grace for grace.' It is an infinity in the divine nature, transferred into the human nature of Christ, and through him communicated unto our souls. From the eternal fountain of the divine nature, through the human nature of Christ, which hath an immeasurable fulness, as the head of the church, it is, I say, transfused to all his members. In this he is 'fairer than the children of men.'

(2.) He is so in the excellency of his work. The work that Christ did, was such as none ever did or could do, but only he himself. It is true, 'the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;' John i. 17. Could not the law give grace, and do this business, so as to bring in an everlasting righteousness, pardon of sin, save the soul, make us accepted with God? No. Rom. viii. 3. 'What the law could not do, that God, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, did.' But there were sacrifices of the law; when men had sinned, they could make atonement: no, 'sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldest not; then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will;' Psal. xl. 8. But would there not be righteousness, if men observe the law and follow after it? Alas! they could not obtain it, Rom. x. 3, 4. 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' So that neither the deeds of the law, nor the sacrifices of the law, nor the righteousness of the law, will do; 'the redemption of our souls is precious,' and would have ceased for ever, if Christ had not been found to undertake this work. When there was but a book to be opened of revelations for the church, none was found worthy to open it, until Christ prevailed, Rev. v. 2, &c. If there could be no new revelations made but only by Christ, much less could any in heaven or earth redeem the souls of men from death and hell, bring them into favour with God, and work out eternal redemption for them.

(3.) He is more excellent than all the sons of men, in the revelation he has made of the will of God. Christ has made such a revelation of the will, love, and grace of God, as none of the children of men ever saw before.

These are the things we ought to consider in Christ, as he is fairer than the children of men; in the dignity of his person, in the excellency of his work, and in the glory of his revelation.

You will say, why should we consider Christ in these his incomparable excellencies? I answer, [1.] That our hearts be not taken away, nor engrossed by the children of men, and what belongs unto them, their glory, their honours, their lusts, their pleasures, their righteousness. If we would not have our hearts allured, and drawn off with them, the way is, to exercise our faith upon the incomparable excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can the world be to us an all-sufficient God, and a great reward? Can the world pardon our sins, save our souls, deliver us from wrath to come, reveal to us the mystery of truth from the bosom of the Father? Can it make known the mind of God? communicate grace and love to us? If it cannot, then let us dwell in our thoughts on him, who is fairer than the children of men.

[2.] The consideration of these excellencies in Christ, is exceedingly suited to increase faith and love in us. They are the proper objects in Christ of these graces. What is it we believe and love? Do not we believe in Christ, as the Son of God, as God-man in one person? Do not we love him, as he is so? Do not we believe he hath made atonement for us? And do not we believe and love the excellency of his work? Then the exercise of our thoughts upon these things, is the way to increase faith and love in us. And the great reason why we are so weak in our faith, and so cold in our love, is, because we exercise our souls no more to immediate direct thoughts upon Christ, and his excellencies. We live by reflex considerations upon the benefits of Christ; but if we could exercise our souls more directly, in daily thoughts of Christ in faith and love, we should increase more in these graces, and be more transformed into his likeness; 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image,' &c. 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is not such a cheap thing to be a Christian as most imagine. What wandering

thoughts have the generality of Christians about Christ, and never once examine into their thoughts, whether they have any spiritual acquaintance with him or no?

II. The second thing to consider in the words is, The endowment of Christ in his human nature, for the discharge of this great office and work, which is here ascribed unto him in this psalm, set forth by grace being poured into his lips.

And there are three things that may be observed: 1. The nature of this endowment; and that is, grace. 2. The manner of its communication, and that is, poured; it is not dropped, but poured. 3. The seat of it being communicated, grace is poured into his lips.

1. The nature of this endowment; it is grace.

Grace in Scripture is taken two ways: (1.) For inherent grace and holiness, or the graces of the Spirit. Things that are bestowed upon men, and wrought in them, they are called grace, the same as the principle of spiritual life. (2.) Grace is taken externally for favour and love. 'We are saved by grace,' i. e. by the free favour of God.

It is here taken in the first sense, for the internal principle of grace and holiness; this was poured into the lips of Christ. Grace, in the second sense, is also mentioned in the last clause of the verse, 'therefore God has blessed thee for ever.'

And we may observe, in reference to the seat of it, that it hath particular respect unto the prophetical office of Christ, whereby he discharged his duty in the revelation of the will of God. Christ did manifest and evidence grace in all he did and said in this world, as the lips are the way of manifesting the mind.

It is the first of these things I shall chiefly discourse on, viz. The endowment that renders the human nature of Christ so exceedingly desirable and glorious, is grace.

That which rendered Christ so beautiful, so desirable, and glorious, was not secular wisdom, though there was in him the greatest fulness of all wisdom; it was not the pomp, the greatness, the glory of the world, outward ornaments, or any thing that men esteem; no, it was that which men hate and persecute, that rendered Christ so beautiful and glorious. God did not endow Christ with riches; no, he

was poor, so poor, that he had not where to lay his head; nor with bodily appearance, for he was a worm, and no man. But, saith God, I will render him glorious. How? He shall be full of grace. We saw his glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father. We saw it, say they; the world saw nothing but a poor man, whom they despised; but we saw his glory. And what was that glory? 'He was full of grace;' John i. 14. Even the glory of Jesus Christ consists in grace.

And why doth this glory of Christ consist in grace? For these three ends:

(1.) Because in this internal grace consists the reparation of the image of God. All the glory that God thought meet to communicate to his creature man (and it was unspeakable, and all he designed him for), was to make him in his own image and likeness. This was the glory God intended; every thing else doth but follow it. Now, we left this image, and became as like the devil, as if we had been begotten by him; John viii. 44. 'We are the children of the devil, he is our father;' we are a generation of vipers, the seed of the serpent by nature. But it is grace that doth repair, and renew this image of God. It is grace that makes a representation of God unto us, and therefore doth Christ's glory consist in grace. The apostle tells us so, 2 Cor. iv. 6. 'We behold the glory of God in the face of Christ.' How is that? Why, in that abounding grace that was in Christ, there is made such a representation of God, that there we may see his likeness. It is the human nature of Christ that makes the great representation of God, because he hath all that which is the image and likeness of God, viz. grace, in the fulness of it in him.

(2.) This grace is the glory of Christ, because it is that which inclines the heart of Jesus Christ unto all that goodness and kindness that he hath shewed unto us. Whence was it that Jesus Christ loved us so, as to lay down his life for us? Whence does he continue to have compassion on us, even when we were ignorant, and wandered out of the way? It is from that abounding, unspeakable, heavenly love that was in his heart and soul, that inclined him to it. The more grace we have, the more we have of love, compassion and delight in doing the will of God. But there was that

abundance in Christ that inclined him to do all this good for us, to live, to die, to intercede for us. This makes Christ very beautiful and glorious to the eye of faith.

(3.) It is the glory of Christ, as he is the great example and pattern, whereunto we ought to labour after a conformity. When we had lost all, and wandered up and down, it was not enough that we should have a rule set us, but we must moreover have a pattern to follow; we must be like unto Christ. And there is an unconquerable desire implanted in the heart of every believer in the world, to be like unto Jesus Christ, because God hath, in the way of an ordinance, appointed him to be our pattern. And we are but trifling Christians, and a dishonour to our profession, if we make not this the design of our souls continually, that we may be in the world as Christ was; that the same mind may be in us, that was in him; Phil. ii. 5. The same meekness, humility, self-denial, faith, love, patience, that was in him.

To close, in a way of use; If this internal grace and holiness was that wherein Christ was fairer than the children of men, because grace was poured into his lips; then,

1. Let us learn to esteem it above all other things. That which rendered Christ beautiful, will render us so; not in the eyes of the world; no, it did not render Christ so to the world. The more he abounded in grace, the more they despised him. But it renders us beautiful in the sight of God, and all the holy angels, and in the judgment of all believers upon earth. If we be but like unto Christ in any measure, it will render us fair, beautiful, desirable in the eyes of all that have eyes to see, and hearts to discern it.

2. Let us not value so much the lustre, the splendour, and glory that earthly men have in earthly things, in their riches, power, honour, and the like. How apt are we to fret ourselves sometimes at the thoughts of these things, and think they have a peculiar happiness; that they are so great and glorious as they appear, and make a shew of: but God knows, there is nothing in them but what is the object of his contempt, and of all the saints and angels, and will be so to all eternity.

SERMON IX.*

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.—Psal. xlv. 3.

In the second verse, we have a description of the person of Christ, and of the ground of God's blessing, and accepting of him in his work; the psalm having a double design; first, To shew the glory of Christ in his kingly office. Secondly, To shew the mutual love that is between Christ and his church.

This third verse sets forth his entering upon the first part of his work, and is spoken by the way of encouragement unto Christ in the name of God the Father, to undertake his office, and to go through with it. 'Gird thy sword,' saith he, 'upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.'

There are three things in the words:

I. The work that is proposed unto Jesus Christ, or rather his preparation for his work; 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.'

II. The manner how he should go through this work; 'With thy glory and thy majesty.' And that which I shall particularly enlarge on.

III. The appellation that is here given to Christ, which is, most Mighty. He is most mighty in the execution of his office, which he is exalted unto.

I. We have Christ's preparation for his work, 'Gird thy sword on thy thigh.' Consider two things: 1. What is the sword of Christ; 2. What is meant by girding this sword upon his thigh.

1. The sword of Christ is the word of God; so it is called, 'the sword of the Spirit,' which is the word of God. Eph. vi. 17. The Spirit being the great immediate agent, whereby Christ administers his kingdom. That which is the sword of the Spirit, is the sword of Christ. And therefore, where Christ is described in his kingdom, it is said,

* This sermon was preached at Stadham, June 21, 1674.

that 'he hath a sword proceeding out of his mouth;' Rev. i. 16. which, in another place is called 'the rod of his mouth;' Isa. xi. 4. It is the word of God, the great instrument of Christ in managing of his kingdom, that is called here his sword.

2. Concerning this, it is said, 'gird thy sword upon thy thigh.' The girding of the sword upon the thigh, is the putting of it into readiness for use. When David was going up against Nabal, he said unto his men, 1 Sam. xxv. 13. 'Gird ye on every man his sword.' Wherefore Christ's girding his sword upon his thigh, is the disposing of the word into the ordinances of the gospel, where it may be ready for use. It hath respect unto the time when he ascended on high, and sent forth his word for the setting up of his kingdom. Then he put his word in readiness to effect the great designs of his love and grace, 'when he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers;' Eph. iv. 11. He furnished men with gifts and abilities to dispense this word, unto the ends of his kingdom.

II. The manner of going through his work, is, 'with thy glory and with thy majesty.' The glory and majesty of Christ are his power and authority. And so it is prophesied of as an encouragement unto the Lord Christ, that he should clothe his word with power and authority for the ends of setting up his kingdom, the edification of his church, and the preservation of it in the world.

These things I speak in a general way; I shall now more particularly address myself,

III. To the appellation that is here given unto Christ, O most mighty, גבור from גבר, one that prevails in every thing he takes in hand.

Observe from hence, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as king of the church, is endowed with a mighty power for the accomplishing of all the designs and ends of this rule and kingdom. It is said of him, Psal. lxxxix. 19. 'God hath laid help upon one that is mighty.' It is spoken there primarily of David, 'I have found David my servant.' But what could poor David do? one taken from the sheepfold? It was not a laying help therefore upon David that was mighty, absolutely speaking, but a putting strength into

him. But David was a type of Christ, and to him must the passage be referred; he is the mighty One. Also Isa. lxiii. 1. describing of Christ in his kingdom, saith, 'It is I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.' And again, in Psal. xxiv. 7, &c. there is a description of his ascension into heaven; the gates and everlasting doors being lifted up, that he, the King of glory, may enter in: the question being asked, 'Who is this King of glory?' saith he, 'The Lord, strong and mighty.' It is a property every where ascribed unto Jesus Christ, that he is mighty.

Here we may inquire, 1. Whence Christ is thus mighty for the execution of his kingly office; and, 2. To what ends he doth put forth this might and power.

1. Whence is Christ thus mighty? Christ is mighty upon two accounts:

(1.) From the omnipotent power of his divine nature, which is the principle of his mighty operations in the union of his person. So the prophet declares, Isa. ix. 6. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:' and how shall he be called? 'Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God.' This child that is born unto us, this son that is given unto us, his name shall be, that is, he really is, The mighty God; Why so? because of the union of the divine nature, with the human in the same person, whereby the same person becomes a child born, and also the mighty God.

(2.) He is mighty, from the authority and power that was communicated and given unto him, by the Father, as mediator, for the accomplishing of his whole work. Two things concur to make one legally mighty to proper ends; first, Strength and power. Secondly, Authority. Where there is strength and power, and no authority, it is force. And where there is authority, but no strength or power, that authority will be void. Christ had strength and power as the mighty God; and he hath authority too, as all power is communicated to him by God the Father, as may be seen in Matt. xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 20—22. and many other places.

But it will be objected, if Christ be the mighty God by nature, how comes it to pass, that he should have power and authority given unto him; God hath given unto him might and dominion, far above all principalities, &c.

I answer, Christ, as his power is given to him, is consi-

dered, not absolutely as God, nor absolutely as man; but as God-man, mediator, one that mediates between God and man: and so his power to erect his kingdom, is given him of his Father.

2. The second iniquiry is, Unto what ends doth the Lord Jesus put forth this mighty power wherewith he is endowed? I answer, to these five ends: (1.) Unto the erecting of his kingdom, or church in the world; (2.) To the preservation of it; (3.) To the subduing of his enemies; (4.) To the raising of the dead; (5.) In the judging of all flesh, and distributing of eternal rewards and punishments. All which are acts of mighty power.

(1.) Jesus Christ puts forth this mighty power in erecting and building of his church. In Matt. xvi. 18. our Lord saith, 'I will build my church;' and the apostle, in Heb. iii. 3, 4. shews, that it was an act of divine power, to build this church of God, 'He that built all things is God.' No one could build a church in all ages, but God himself. And if we were able to take a view how Jesus Christ first built his church in the world, we should learn not to distrust his power in any thing he had afterward to do. There was a combination of hell, and of all the power of the world, against the interest of Christ and the gospel. The concurring suffrage of mankind, wise and unwise, learned and unlearned, Jew and Greek, influenced by their interest, by all that was dear unto them, set themselves in a combination against Christ's building of his kingdom. He employed against all this force a few poor men, unlearned, unskilful, and gives into their hands, only the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; furnishes them only with gifts, and abilities for the dispensing of the word, which was 'his girding of his sword upon his thigh:' he set these poor men to work; and clothing them with his glory and majesty, they make havoc in the devil's kingdom, and destroy it by degrees, until they root it out of the earth. It was then an act of mighty power in Christ, to build his kingdom and church.

(2.) Christ puts forth this mighty power, in the preserving of his church, being so founded, and built on him. It is that which he expresses, Isa. xxvii. 3. 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.' The church being built, is

not able to stand of itself; for unto the end of time, the gates of hell and the power of the world shall be engaged against it. But, saith he, 'I will keep it, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' There is a carnal church in the world, or a wordly church; and how is that kept? by force, laws, and power of men, who have wrapped up their secular interest in the preserving of it, and they will fight for their kingdom. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus Christ hath a spiritual church, of them that believe in him; they also are preserved, and by what means? by a secret emanation of mighty power from Jesus Christ. There hath not been any age in the world since the ascension of Christ, but there hath been an emanation, or putting forth of this mighty power of Christ in preserving of this church. He preserved a people under the whole apostacy of antichrist. Had there been none left in the earth to fear him, and believe in him, all the promises of God to him had come to an end. But he did secretly, by his mighty power, preserve a people to himself in the midst of all the defection of antichrist. And he doth so at this day in the midst of the new defection made to antichrist: for, in former days, the world fell off to antichrist by superstition and idolatry; they are now falling off to him by profaneness and atheism: yet Jesus Christ, by his mighty power under both, or by a secret exertion of his power, preserves his church through all, and carries them as safe through the new opposition, as he did through the old.

(3.) He puts forth his power, for the subduing and conquering of his and his church's enemies.

What enemies has Christ? What enemies has the church? As many as there are devils in hell, and men and women in the world, that are of the seed of the serpent. But I may reduce all the enmity to the interest of Christ upon earth, to these four heads: [1.] Satan; [2.] The world; [3.] Sin; [4.] Death. Christ is most mighty in conquering all these enemies.

[1.] He puts forth his mighty power in conquering of Satan. This was the first word that was spoken of him in the world, in Gen. iii. 15. 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' The

first discovery God made to his creatures concerning the incarnation of his Son, was in this, that he would destroy Satan; and so the Holy Ghost tells us he hath done, Col. ii. 15. 'He spoiled principalities and powers,' and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.' These words, 'He spoiled principalities and powers,' are an exposition of the former promise in Genesis, that 'the seed of the woman,' Jesus Christ, 'should break the serpent's head.' How should he do it? Why, in spoiling principalities and powers, and triumphing over them openly in his cross. So he saith, in Heb. ii. 14. 'That through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' He did not destroy him as to his being, but as to his power and authority. Hence, first, The devil hath a limited power only remaining, such as shall never prejudice the eternal interest of the church. And, secondly, He is reserved unto eternal destruction by this mighty power of Christ.

[2.] The second enemy of Christ is the world; and that may be considered either in the men of it, or in the power of it.

In the men of it. The Lord Christ puts forth his mighty power to deal with, and subdue all the men of the world, that rise up in opposition against him. Whatever success they may seem to have, they are all made his footstool. 'He shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel;' Psal. ii. 9. And you have him twice or thrice described in the Revelations, as going forth in his mighty power, for the subduing of all his adversaries. See Rev. xix. 11—21.

And this must be, for he shall subdue all the authority in the world; not only the persons of men, but all the power, and all the authority which is set up against him, or exercised against his interest. 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. 'When he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet.' There is a suspension of the issue of all things, until Christ hath thus put down all that opposeth him and his interest. But there is an expectation in heaven, and in earth, in the whole creation; all are waiting, as if one single person, for the putting forth this mighty power of Christ, for

the subduing of all unto him; for the end will not be till then. Whatever we endure, we must be contented with it, whatsoever we suffer, the end must not be till all his enemies be made his footstool, and there be nothing to stand up against him, who is most mighty.

[3.] Sin in his people, is another enemy of Christ. Sin, as it is in men by nature, is that which gives life and efficacy to all the enmity that is acted against him; and as it remains even in believers themselves, it doth act a great enmity against Christ. How come we then to be freed from it? How comes it to be subdued? The apostle, in Rom. vii. gives an account of the great contest, and conflict that believers have with the remainder of sin in them, that makes them cry out for deliverance from it, ver. 24, 25. It is a sudden breaking forth of the apostle there, when he was describing the law of sin; for he cries out, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me,' &c. But he as suddenly takes up, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Through the power of Christ this enemy, sin, shall be subdued. Therefore, chap. vi. 14. it is said, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' If you come under grace, or under the rule of Christ, sin shall not have dominion over you. What is the reason of it? Where is the consequence of the argument? Because sin is one great enemy of Christ, and he will certainly conquer it.

[4.] Death is another enemy. It is the last enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. 'He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' And, in ver. 54. he tells us, that 'death is swallowed up in victory;' a conquest is obtained over it. It is the last enemy, because, until the consummation of all things, we shall be subject to its power; but that shall also come under the feet of Christ, when we shall die no more.

This is the third end wherefore Christ puts forth this mighty, or exceeding greatness of his power, namely, for the subduing of his enemies.

(4.) The fourth end for which Christ puts forth the greatness of his power, is for the raising up all his church from the dead: Phil. iii. 20, 21. 'Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for a Saviour, the

Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.' The mighty power of Christ reaches thus far, that the dead shall be raised thereby: Yes, our vile body shall; the body of our humiliation, that is, the body, as it is fallen into corruption, into a vile estate, though it come to worms and dust, yet he shall revive it by the exceeding greatness of his power. He shall raise the bodies of his people. The privilege of believers in that day, will be, that they shall be first raised, and they shall be peculiarly raised, by the power of Christ, as mediator. Their bodies shall be raised in conformity to his glorious body, when others shall be raised after them, by the mere divine power of Christ, and raised with all their own vileness upon them.

(5.) And lastly, to mention no more, The mighty power of Christ is put forth in judging of all the world, and distributing to them rewards of bliss, or woe, that shall abide to all eternity, Matt. xxv. 31—46.

Thus you see, why the Holy Ghost, by the psalmist, calls Christ here the mighty One, one that will mightily prevail in every thing. It is because of his divine power, he is the mighty God; because of his mediatorial authority; there is committed unto him all power in heaven and in earth. He doth put forth this power for the erecting of his church, for its preservation, for the subduing of his enemies, in the raising of the dead, and distributing rewards and punishments.

SERMON X.*

THE USE AND ADVANTAGE OF FAITH IN A TIME OF PUBLIC CALAMITY.

But the just shall live by his faith.—HAB. ii. 4.

THIS is the first time these words are mentioned in the Scripture, but they are three times quoted by the apostle Paul; he preached as it were thrice upon them. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. Heb. x. 38. For it is full of heavenly matter, and is made use of by the apostle to several purposes. I know no one text that hath been more preached upon, or more written upon by them who have treated of the life of faith; how the just live the life of justification; and how they live the life of sanctification, the life of consolation, the life of peace, the life of joy, the life of obedience, &c. My design is quite of another nature, and is that which falls in with the design of the prophet in the first use of the words, as we shall presently see.

You know, that for many years, upon all these occasions, without failing, I have been warning of you continually of an approaching calamitous time, and considering the sins that have been the causes of it. The day is with the Lord, the year, and month I know not; but I have told you, 'That judgment will begin at the house of God;' that in the latter days of the church, 'perilous times will come;' that God seems to 'have hardened our hearts from his fear;' and caused us 'to err from his way;' and that none knows what 'the power of his wrath will be.' In all these things I have foretold you of perilous, distressing, calamitous times; and in all men's apprehensions, they now lie at the door, and are entering in upon us. Now I must change my design; and my present work will be both upon this, and, if I live, upon some other occasions, to shew how we ought to deport ourselves in and under the approaches of distressing calamities

* This sermon was preached April 9, 1680.

that are coming upon us, and may reach, it may be, up to the very neck.

What this text teaches us is, That in the approaches of overwhelming calamities, and in the view of them, we ought, in a peculiar manner, to live by faith. That is the meaning of the place.

And that this is our duty, appears from this passage, and the context. For the prophet had received a vision, a dreadful vision from God, of the coming in of the Chaldeans, and of the destruction they would bring upon the church, and upon all the land, in the foregoing chapter. Having received this vision, he considers what is his own duty, and what is the duty of the church, in the approaches of this distressing calamitous season. Why, saith he, ver. 1. 'I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.' God will reprove me; there will be great arguings between God and my soul: I know my own guilt and sin, and I would be in a readiness to have something to answer God when I am reproved, something to betake myself unto. The answer, saith he, I will betake myself unto is this, 'The just shall live by his faith.' Two things are here included.

First, saith he, I will betake myself (as the apostle makes use of it) unto 'Jesus Christ for righteousness.' I have nothing else to answer God, when I am reproved.

Secondly, I will pass through all these terrible and dreadful dispensations of providence that are coming upon me, by living the life of faith: a peculiar way of living, as we shall presently see. When the flood was coming upon the world, 'Noah was a preacher of righteousness;' 2 Pet. ii. 5. What righteousness did Noah preach? Why, that righteousness whereof he himself was partaker, 'for he became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith;' Heb. xi. 7. When the flood was coming, Noah preached the righteousness of faith to the world, that they might escape, if they would attend unto it; but it was rejected by them. Wherefore, I say, in the approach of a calamitous season, there is in an especial way and manner, a living by faith required of us.

But you will say, What is a calamitous season? or when do you esteem a season calamitous?

I will give you two things for the description of such a season as I judge to be manifestly calamitous.

1. When it exceeds the bounds of affliction, or when the dispensations of God's anger in it cannot be reduced to the head of affliction; Ezek. xxi. 9, 10. 13. 'Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord; say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished. It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter. Should we then make mirth? It contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod?' The rod comprises all affliction; but God will bring a sword, a judgment that shall not be reducible to the head of affliction; it shall contemn it. Now, I say, let it be what it will, when a calamity doth befall a people, or the church of God, that cannot be reduced to the head of affliction, but that every one shall find there is anger, judgment, wrath, in it; then it is a distressing time.

2. When judgments fall promiscuously upon all sorts of persons, and make no distinction, then I take it to be a distressing time; for they strip men of the comforts they cherish in their own minds. Job. ix. 22, 23. 'This is one thing; therefore I said it, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.' What doth God always do so? Doth he never make a distinction about judgments? Yes, sometimes; 'but if the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.' When God brings a scourge, or a sword that shall slay promiscuously, that shall seize upon, destroy and devour the innocent, so that they shall not escape, he will be as one that standeth by, rejoicing, to see how they carry themselves under their trial.

Now this is enough to give satisfaction, what I intend by a distressing calamitous time: it cannot be reduced to the head of affliction; and it slayeth suddenly and promiscuously, the perfect and the wicked; and it may be, 'the good figs shall go first into captivity.' I am not much otherwise minded; and God may have mercy for them in that dispensation.

I shall now shew you these two things:

I. How we shall live by faith; how we should deport ourselves; what faith will do in such a season; what our duty

is under the approach of these calamitous, distressing times that are coming upon us.

II. I shall shew you, how faith doth, and will carry it under other perplexities that we have upon us, that we either feel or fear.

1. Faith will guide and act the soul under the approach of these distressing calamities, in these following things.

(1.) It will give the soul a reverential fear of God in his judgments. So it did unto the saints of old; Heb. xi. 7. 'By faith Noah, being warned of God,' εὐλαβηθεὶς, 'moved with a reverential fear.' There is no man that is not stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, but is, upon God's warning, moved with a reverential fear of God in his judgments. It was so with David, Psal. cxix. 120. 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.' He was not afraid as to outward judgments, but under them his flesh trembled with a reverential fear of God. And so was it with the prophet Habakkuk, upon the vision he had of the approach of the Chaldeans, chap. iii. 16. 'When I heard, my belly trembled, and my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.' He had a reverential fear of God in his judgments working upon him. According to my best observation of things in this state wherein we are, the generality of people may be distributed under these three heads: [1.] There are some that are indeed really afraid of approaching judgments; they do not know how soon they will reach unto themselves, their persons, their families, their relations, their estates, all that they have laboured for, and exerted their utmost care and industry about in the world; the flood lies at the door ready to carry all before it; they fear every day. Some men die also for fear of dying; they are poor for fear of poverty; they will part with nothing, because they fear they must part with all. A strange contradiction of spirit! Now this is not the work of faith. So far as it prevails upon any of our spirits, God will rebuke us for it; Isa. li. 12, 13. 'Who art thou that shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, and hast feared continually

every day, because of the fury of the oppressor?' chap. viii. 13. 'and hath not sanctified the Lord in thy heart, nor made him thy fear?' Who art thou? God hates this sinful fear; it is an abomination unto him. This is nothing but the fear of self; we will keep all warm about us, while we are in this world, and are afraid of the besom of destruction. [2.] There are others who utterly despise these things; take no notice of them; who do not think any such distressing calamity shall come upon them; if it does, they shall deal well enough with it. Isa. xxviii. 14, 15. 'They have made a covenant with death, and a league with hell, and say, when the overflowing scourge passes through, it shall not come near them.' They have a thousand ways to disinterest themselves from any thing of the most distressing calamity, that is coming over the world. This swallows up the generality of mankind, and is that which the prophet doth so reflect upon. Isa. xxvi. 11. 'When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at thy people, and the fire of thine adversaries shall devour them.' [3.] The other sort is mentioned in Judges v. 6. and may be called way-side men, idle, discoursive men, that have nothing else to do, but to walk up and down and talk, and are not concerned with a reverence of God and his judgments; they talk of them as if there was no God in heaven to regard them, or as if they had no concernment with him. If we have the least true saving faith in exercise, it will cast this cursed frame out of our hearts, it will be daily working it out of our souls, and will bring us to that which I told you is its proper work. 'God,' saith the psalmist, Psal. ix. 16. 'is known by the judgment which he executes.' And what of God, is principally known in the judgments which he executes in the world, is but little considered. That which God makes known of himself in a peculiar manner in these dreadful dispensations is, his majesty, his holiness, and his power.

God will appear to be awfully majestic and wonderfully glorious in such dispensations. He speaks of himself upon that occasion; Isa. ii. 19—21. 'In that day shall a man cast away his idols of silver, and idols of gold, to the moles, and to the bats; to go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of

his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.' If we have the light of faith to let it in, we shall see a majesty and glory in God's actings, even in his public and distressing judgments; such a greatness, and a glory, that the soul will be constrained to bow down before him.

God doth in his judgments also manifest his holiness, of which we shall speak afterward. So Rev. xv. 4. 'Who will not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.' How doth this appear? 'For thy judgments are made manifest.' When God makes his judgments manifest, his holiness will appear. And so, when Habakkuk came to plead with God about that great judgment of the Chaldeans, which gave occasion to my text, he cries out, 'O Lord my God, my Holy One, thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.'

God in them also glorifies himself in his power. He sets up one, and pulleth down another, and doth whatsoever he pleases; herein he manifestly shews his sovereign power.

Now, to live by faith, is to cast out all those cursed frames before mentioned, and to bring this frame into your hearts, as the foundation of all that follows, namely, that you have a reverential fear of the majesty, the holiness, and the power of God, in all his judgments. And without this, we shall not please God in any thing we do. These are the true sayings of God. If there be another frame in us, this dispensation will pierce to the very soul before it be over: that is the first thing.

(2.) Where faith hath filled the soul with a reverential fear of God, its first work will be to put the soul upon preparing and providing an ark for itself: so it was in the great example of our faith before mentioned. Noah, being moved by fear, 'prepared an ark,' wherein he saved himself and his family. Let men pretend what they will, unless they are under a strange careless stupidity and security (which I fear is upon the generality of professors), they cannot, in such a season as this, but be preparing some reserve for themselves. What shall we do when this comes upon us? They have some predominant reserve. 'The rich man's wealth is his strong city;' Prov. xviii. 11. He may lose a great deal, but he will save enough for himself; so the strong man trusts to his strength, the wise man to his wis-

dom: one thing or other men prepare for themselves to be an ark against the storm comes; and those who do not so, they fluctuate up and down at uncertainties, hoping, that by one way and means or another, that they know not of, they shall be carried above all, have a good issue; that it shall not be as this or that prophet, or minister foretells, but that some way they shall escape. This is not to prepare an ark, which is the work of faith to do. And here I shall inquire into two things: [1.] What is this ark that is to be prepared; [2.] How we ought to enter into it, or how we are to make especial entrance into it, in reference to an approaching calamitous season. I say,

[1.] This ark is Jesus Christ; faith in him is necessary. In this chapter of my text, where inquiry is made, what shall be answered unto God, and what course shall be taken upon the coming in of the overflowing flood of the Chaldeans; this is the course to be taken, 'The just shall live by faith.' What is that? It is to seek for righteousness by Christ; to seek afresh for justification and life by Christ. There is no other way, no other ark; and he is described as this ark in that known place, Isa. xxxii. 2. 'And a man,' that is Jesus Christ, 'shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land:' that is the ark. I know not how to describe what I intend, by securing ourselves in the ark, like the description the prophet here gives, though in terms metaphorical. Likewise in Micah, v. 5. having given a promise of Christ, he adds, 'And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land.' To betake ourselves to the ark, is to betake ourselves to the fountain of our peace. And so Psal. ii. 12. 'If God's wrath be kindled but a little,' how then? 'blessed are all they that' betake themselves unto him, 'trust in him;' in whom? in the Son; 'kiss the Son.' And surely, my brethren, the wrath of God is now kindled not a little, but a great deal, in all sorts and ways. The indications of the wrath of God are upon the spirits of men of all sorts, of professors, of the world, in their own persons, in all societies and relations. Where are we then to betake ourselves, but unto Christ? 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

[2.] But now, it would not have advantaged either Noah or his sons to have an ark prepared for them, unless they had a door to the ark. 'Make a door,' saith God to them, 'that ye may have entrance.' To obtain an interest in Christ is the general work of faith all our days. But how shall we be able now to make an especial entrance into this ark, suitable unto the state and condition wherein we are, and to approach a calamitous season, that is hastening upon us? I know but of one way for our making an especial entrance into this ark, Jesus Christ, in reference to such a season, which is, the solemn renovation of our covenant with God. This is the way that hath been used by the church from the foundation of the world, without any instance of the contrary; that when a storm was coming, if ever they were delivered from it, they entered into the ark by the renovation of their covenant with God: and seeing the end is certain, we are thus afresh to enter into this ark, Jesus Christ. It is no wisdom in civil things to remove a means, unless we have a better to substitute in the room of it; and it is so in spirituals. I desire all that fear God would stir up their hearts and thoughts, and offer to us (if they can) better way for this church, or any church to enter into the ark in the approach of a storm than this, and it shall be embraced. This church hath done so; though I begin to fear some look upon it as a very dead, sluggish commodity, they know not how to trade with. But do not mistake, you have no such thing lies by you in the sight of God this day. Do not despond, the day is approaching 'when others shall come,' (as it is in Zech. viii. 23.) 'and lay hold upon your skirts, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' Some, blessed be God, and let his holy name be exalted, have far outgone us already, both in zeal and warmth, and courage, under a sense of engagements that are upon them. I look for no safety, no deliverance in the trials and afflictions that are coming upon the earth, but what is had in the way of believing. I value not those that are otherwise minded. Bless God who hath provided for you this door of entrance before the flood comes, and the rain falls; bless God, I say, for it, and make use of it, and be able to plead it with God: and let the Lord know that you have made your choice to be his, and are under his care,

and not under the protection of the world. I will not say you shall be saved temporally, but you shall be saved eternally; I cannot say you shall have peace with men, but you shall have peace with God; I cannot say you shall not lose your lives, but I will say you shall not lose your souls; and these are our principal concernments. Make good your entrance. A door made into the ark will do you no good, unless you enter in and make good your entrance at the door. How shall we make good our entrance into the ark, that we may have safety therein? If we are not at this work, we have no faith. Why, stand to your engagements, stand to the performance of those duties God requires at your hands, not only as there is no one thing required but what is a special duty of the New covenant; but stand to them now as those that have been your entrance into the ark, where God will give you all that rest that in this world you can be partakers of. This is another work of faith in the approach of a calamitous time.

(3.) If we live by faith, in the approach of a calamitous season, this will put us upon the search and examination of our own hearts, what accession we have made to the sins that have procured these judgments. This is that which faith (where it is in any measure sincere) will assuredly put us upon; and it is that God doth now in an especial manner call for. Now the sins which do, and have procured these judgments, are of two sorts. [1.] The open and flagitious ins of the world. [2.] The sins of churches and professors.

[1.] The open and flagitious sins of the world. The apostle reckons them up together, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. 'Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' He doth it again in Eph. v. 5, 6. 'For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' He reckons them up also in Gal. v. 19, &c. 'The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions,

heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such like.' There is a marvellous large copy written out of these texts in the nation at this day: every man may read an exposition of these things in the practice of multitudes. Some will say they bless God they are free from these things, and so they hope they have had no hand in procuring the judgments of God, that are coming upon the nation; let them fall upon them and their interest, who are guilty of these provoking abominations, such as for which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against their ungodliness. Why, it is well if they are not guilty of any of these sins. But the seed and foundation, even of all these sins, lie in our nature, if not in our persons; and what irruptions they have made towards the provoking the eyes of God's glory, I know not. But suppose you have escaped these pollutions that are in the world through lust;

[2.] There are other sins, sins of churches, and of professors, that in reference to Christ's mediatory kingdom, have as great influence for the procuring of judgments, as the worst sins of the world have for the procuring of judgments in his providential kingdom. I know a time when there was a storm, wherein a whole vessel, and all that were in it, were like to have been cast away; but one Jonah, that was in the ship was the cause of the storm.

I shall just mention the judgment-procuring sins of churches and professors, which are reduced in Scripture to these four heads:

1st. Lukewarmness, which was the judgment-procuring sin of Laodicea.

2dly. Contenting ourselves in outward order and freedom from scandal, which was the judgment-procuring sin of Sardis, and will prove ruinous to the best churches in the world.

3dly. Want of love among ourselves, and division in churches.

4thly. Earthly mindedness, and love of the world, and conformity to it, that is found among the generality of professors.

SERMON XI.*

THE USE OF FAITH UNDER REPROACHES AND PERSECUTIONS.

The just shall live by his faith.—HAB. ii. 4.

You may remember, I spake occasionally from that of the psalmist, Psal. xcvii. 2. 'Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;' and from thence took occasion to consider what is our especial duty, when clouds and darkness are round about us, as they are at this day. And some of you know I have had a great persuasion, that the clouds that are gathering, will at least, in their first storm, fall upon the people of God. I must repeat it again and again; I have been warning you for some years, and telling you it would be so. The present frame wherewith I have to conflict in my own spirit, and that frame of spirit which I have observed in others, the state and condition of all churches and professors (so far as I know) is, they are gone into a dreadful security. I speak my heart, and what I know with reference unto our present state, and the cause of God; we are gone, I say, into a dismal security, which still confirms me, that the storm will come upon us, and that it will not be long ere we feel it. My design is, therefore, to shew you how we ought to behave ourselves under the perplexities and difficulties we are to conflict withal in this world. And I have not sat studying for things to speak, but only tell you the experience of my own heart, and what I am labouring after. I have already shewed you, what our duty is under the approach of these distressing calamitous times that are coming upon us; and what faith will do in such a season.

II. I am now in the second place to shew you, how faith will carry it under other perplexities, that either are present, or are coming upon us. And here I shall shew you,

* This sermon was preached April 30, 1680.

1. How we may live by faith, under all the reproaches and persecutions that do or may befall us, upon the account of that order and fellowship of the gospel, of that way of God's worship which we do profess.

2. How we may live by faith with reference unto the returning upon us of antichristian darkness and cruelty, if God shall suffer it so to be.

3. How we may live by faith under an apprehension of great and woful decays in churches, in church members, in professors of all sorts, and in the gradual withdrawings of the glory of God from us upon that account.

1. How may we live by faith with reference unto those reproaches, that scorn and contempt which are cast upon the ways of God, which we profess; that worship of God wherein we are engaged, and that order of the gospel that we do observe; with the persecutions that will attend us upon the account thereof. Truly I may say of it as the Jews said to Paul about Christianity, Acts xxviii. 22. 'As for this way, we know that it is everywhere spoken against.' The whole world seems to be combined, that the name of Israel, in this way, may no more to be had in remembrance. There are few that are concerned about these things, while it is well with them, their families, their relations, estates, inheritances; let the ways of God be reproached, what is that to them? They are not concerned in it. They cannot say as the psalmist doth, when he speaks in the person of Christ, Psal. lxix. 9. 'The reproaches of them that have reproached thee, are fallen upon me.' Perhaps some of us are more sensible than others (or at least have reason so to be), of these reproaches that are continually cast upon the ways of God, seeing they are more particularly upon us. But those that are not concerned in this scorn and contempt, I would say three things.

First, What evidence have you, that you have a concern in God's glory? for these things are those whereby God is glorified in this world; and if you are not concerned, when there are so many reflections thrown upon it, pray consider what evidence you have in yourselves, of any concernment in the glory of God.

Secondly, What evidence have you that you have a love

to these things, that can hear them reproached, scorned, contemned, and never be moved at it? An honest good man would find himself concerned, if his wife or children were reproached with lies, and shameful things, because of his interest in them. But for them that can hear the ways of God reproached every day, and so long as it is well with them and theirs, are not concerned thereat, they can have no evidence that they have a love unto them. Nehemiah cries out upon such an occasion, chap. iv. 4. 'Hear, O our God, for we are despised; and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity.' God hath made special promises to such as are thus concerned, Zeph. iii. 18. 'I will gather them,' saith he. Whom will he gather? 'Them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.' The solemn assemblies were reproached and mocked; and there were some of them (not all) to whom this reproach was a burden; 'These,' saith God, 'I will gather;' gather them under my gracious protection.

Thirdly, To add one word more; if you are not concerned in the reproaches that are cast upon the ways of God, persecution shall awaken you, and either make you concerned, or put an end unto all your profession.

Now the inquiry is, how, under these difficulties that we have to conflict withal, we shall glorify God, and pass through them without loss, unto our spiritual advantage.

The apostle, in the tenth chapter to the Hebrews, where he describes this very condition I have been speaking of, doth fully direct us. 'Ye endured,' saith he, 'a great fight of afflictions, partly while ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used; for ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods,' &c. ver. 32—34. But how shall we carry ourselves under this condition here described? 'Now,' saith he, ver. 38. 'the just shall live by faith.'

What is the work of faith in this condition, that we may glorify God, and carry it through to a good and comfortable issue to ourselves? call your own hearts to an account, and see how faith will work to give you support and

supply. I will tell you what I am labouring after in my own heart; and the Lord direct you to find out what will be more useful. What will faith do in such a case? I answer,

(1.) Faith will give us such an experience of the power, efficacy, sweetness, and benefit of gospel ordinances, and gospel worship, as shall cause us to despise all that the world can do in opposition unto us. Here I would cast my anchor, and exhort you, not to be confident of yourselves, for nothing else will keep and preserve you. An opinion, a well-grounded opinion and judgment, will not preserve you. Love to this or that man's ministry, will not preserve you; that you are able to dispute for your ways, will not preserve you; I can give you instances wherein they have all failed: resolutions, that if all men should leave them, you would not, are insufficient. Nothing can preserve you, but a sense and experience of the usefulness and sweetness of gospel administrations, according unto the mind of Jesus Christ. This faith alone can give you. 'Desire,' saith the apostle Peter, 'the sincere milk of the word;' 1 Pet. ii. 2. Desire, and labour to continue in the ordinances of the gospel, and the worship of God under the administration of the word. How? 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' ver. 3. otherwise you will never desire it. I should hope, that through the grace of God (and otherwise I do not hope it), I might yet continue, if indeed I could keep alive an experience, that in the dispensation of the word, I find a constant exercise of faith in God, delight in him, love to him; if I find, that I come to the word, as expecting to receive from God a sense of his love, and supply of his grace; I should then, I say, have good hope through grace, that ten thousand difficulties should never shake me in my continuance in this way. But if it be otherwise, there will be no continuance nor abiding. I mention these things, because, to the best observation, such a poor worm as I am can make, there is a mighty coldness and indifferency grown upon the spirits of men, in attending to the worship of God. There is not that life, spirit, courage, and delight in it, as hath been in times past; and if so, where it may end God only knows. This, I say, is the first thing that faith will do in this state, if we set it on work. If we would but labour to stir up faith to find those supplies of spiritual life and

strength in the ways of his worship and ordinances; if we would labour to overcome prejudices, and set ourselves against sloth and negligence, we should find ourselves as other men, and greatly set at liberty, as to what the world can do unto us. This is that which faith can do for us, in such a state of things; and this is that I would be labouring to bring my own heart unto.

(2.) Faith, in such a season, will bring the soul into such an experimental sense of the authority of Jesus Christ, as to make it despise all other things. I profess, if it were not for the authority of Christ, I would renounce all your meetings; they would have neither form nor comeliness in them, why they should be desired. But a deep respect unto the authority of Christ (unless our evil hearts are betrayed by unbelief and weakness), is that which will carry us through all that may befall us. Faith will work this double respect unto the authority of Christ:

[1.] As he is the great head and lawgiver of the church; who alone hath received all power from the Father, to institute all worship; and whoever imposes herein, usurps his crown and dignity. All power to institute spiritual worship is given unto Christ in heaven, and in earth. What then? 'Go, therefore,' saith he, 'and teach men to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;' Matt. xxviii. 18. 20. Bring your souls to this exercise of faith, that these things we do, are commanded us by Christ, who is the sovereign Lord of our consciences, who hath sovereign authority over our souls. We must all appear before his judgment-seat, who will require of us, whether we have done and observed what he hath commanded us, or no? Do not only say these things, but labour greatly by faith to affect your consciences with this authority of Christ, and you will find that all other authorities will come to nothing, however you may suffer for it.

[2.] Faith respects the authority of Christ, as he is 'Lord of lords, and King of kings;' as he sits at the right hand of God, expecting all his enemies to become his footstool; as he hath not only a golden sceptre in his hand, 'a sceptre of righteousness,' wherewith he rules his church, but also an iron rod, to break all his enemies in pieces, like a potter's vessel. *If faith exercises* itself upon this power and authority of

Christ over his enemies, it will pour contempt upon all that the world can do. You cannot be carried before any magistrate, but Christ is there present greater than them all, who hath their breath in his hands, their lives, and their ways at his disposal, and can do what he pleases with them. Faith will bring in the presence of Christ in such a season; when otherwise your hearts would fail for fear, and you would be left unto your own wisdom, which is folly, and your own strength, which is but weakness. But if you have but faith working in the sense of this authority, it will make you like those well composed persons in the third of Daniel. Do not wonder at the greatness of their answer, and the composure of their spirits, when they looked on the fiery furnace on the one hand, and the fiery countenance of terrible majesty on the other. 'Know, that God,' say they, 'whom we serve, is able to deliver us out of thy hand; but if not,' if God will not give us this present deliverance, 'be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image;' ver. 17, 18. Faith will give us the same composure of spirit, and the same resolution; and with these things should we relieve ourselves under the worst that can befall us.

(3.) Faith, in such a case and condition, will bring to mind, and make effectual upon our souls, the examples of them that have gone before us, in giving the same testimony that we do, and in the sufferings that they underwent upon that account. When the apostle had told the believing Hebrews, that through all their trials, tribulations, and sufferings, they must live by faith, Heb. x. what encouragement, might they say, shall we receive by faith? Why, saith he, faith will bring to mind all the examples of them that have gone before you, that have suffered, and been afflicted, and distressed as you now are; which account takes up the whole eleventh chapter, and a good part of the beginning of the twelfth. It is a great thing when faith revives an example. Let us then by faith, carry in our minds the examples that are recorded in the Scripture. There is the example of Moses, the apostle gives it us; and it is an eminent instance; 'He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of

Egypt.' He, by the dark promise he had to live upon, endured the reproach of Christ. My brethren, take the prophets for an example of them that have suffered; and consider how the apostles have gone before us; but do not stop at them, for there is a greater than Moses and the prophets, and apostles; greater than even a cloud of witnesses, and that is no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. xii. 2. 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.' He underwent the contradiction of sinners against himself, 'and is now set down at the right hand of God.' Faith calling to mind these great examples, would give us great support under all the trials we may be brought unto, and conflict with. Whither are we going? What do we hope for? We would be where Moses is, and where the prophets are; but how got they thither? They did not get thither through the increase of riches, and multiplying to themselves lordships in the world, but by sufferings, and the cross. Through many tribulations they entered into the kingdom of heaven.

(4.) Faith will receive in the supplies that Christ hath laid up for his people, in such a season. Christ hath made peculiar provision for suffering saints. And it consists in two things: First, In his special presence with them. He will be with them in the fire, and in the water. Secondly, In the communication of the sense of God's love unto them. 'Their tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and then the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us;' Rom. v. 3—5. Faith will bring all these things into the soul. But your minds must be spiritual, or you cannot put forth one act of faith for the bringing in this special provision that is laid up for suffering saints. And very few attain this spiritual frame, where faith fetches in these spiritual consolations Christ hath prepared for such souls. This is one way whereby we may live by faith in such a season. Search, therefore, and make inquiry in your entrance into troubles, what sense faith gives you of the love of God, to carry you through these difficulties.

(5.) It is faith alone that can relieve us with respect unto the recompense of reward. Moses suffered affliction

with the people of God, 'for he had respect to the recompense of reward;' Heb. xi. 20. The light and momentary afflictions which we undergo in this world, 'will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;' 2 Cor. iv. 17. Who knows, but in a few days, some of us may be taken into that incomprehensible glory? where we shall eternally admire that ever we did put any manner of weight on things here below. Faith will fix your eye on the eternal recompense of reward. We have indeed a faith now at work, that fixes the minds of men upon this and that way of deliverance, and this and that strange accident; but we shall find that true faith will burn up all this as stubble.

(6.) And lastly, Faith will work by patience. The apostle tells us, 'we have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God, we may inherit the promises; and we are to be followers of them who through faith and patience, inherit the promises;' Heb. x. 36. vi. 12.

This is something of what I had to offer unto you, and I hope both seasonable and useful. However, it is what I can attain unto in these times of reproach, scorn, and contempt that is cast upon us, and persecutions approaching. I say faith will discover to us that efficacy, sweetness, power, and advantage in spiritual ordinances, as to make us willing to undergo any thing for them. Faith will bring our souls into such subjection unto the authority of Christ, as head of the church, and Lord over the whole creation, that we shall not be terrified with what man can do unto us. Faith will furnish us with examples of the saints of God, whom he hath helped, and assisted to go through sufferings, and who are now crowned and at rest in heaven. Faith will help us to keep our eye fixed, not upon the things of this world, but upon the eternal recompense of another world, and glory therein. And faith will also work by patience, when difficulties shall be multiplied upon us.

SERMON XII.*

THE USE OF FAITH, IF POPERY SHOULD RETURN UPON US.

The just shall live by his faith.—HAB. ii. 4.

OUR inquiry is, how we may live by faith, with reference unto these difficulties we have, or may have, to conflict with in the days wherein we live. The last head we spake to was, how we may live by faith in reference to all the reproaches and scornful contempts that are cast upon that way of worship, that order and fellowship of the gospel, which we cleave unto; and the persecutions which we may undergo upon that account. I now proceed.

2. The second difficulty that we have, or may have to conflict with, is the return of popery into this land. Half the talk of the world is upon this subject. I have nothing to say to some among ourselves; but I verily believe, that those who have the conduct of the papal antichristian affairs throughout the world, are endeavouring to bring it in upon us. I remember what holy Latimer said when he came to die. 'Once I believed popery would never return into England, but,' said he, 'I find it was not faith, but fancy.' I wish it prove not so with many of us. Now that which I am to speak unto is this, How we should live by faith, both in the prospect of the danger of it, and if it should come upon us. I shall name unto you a few things which I exercise myself with. If you have more supporting thoughts, and a better guidance of light, I pray God confirm it unto you.

(1.) The first thing I would exercise my thoughts upon, and that my faith rests in, in this case, is this, That there is a fixed determinate time in the counsel of God, when antichrist, and Babylon, and idolatry, and superstition, together with that profaneness of life which they have brought in,

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shall be destroyed. It is so fixed, that it shall not be altered, all the wisdom of men, all the sins of men, and all our unbelief, shall not hinder it a day; it shall assuredly come to pass in its appointed season. This time is reckoned up in Scripture by days, by months, by years; not that we should know the time of it, but that we should know the certainty of it; for if it hath but so many days, but so many months, and years, then it must have a certain period.

Under the Old Testament, we see this all along. Saith God to Abraham, 'Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them four hundred years, and then I will judge that nation;' Gen. xv. 14, 15. They knew not the beginning nor the ending of this four hundred years; but they knew, that at the end of them, it should be as God had said; 'and the selfsame day it came to pass;' Exod. xii. 41. Likewise God threatens the Jews with a seventy years captivity in Babylon; 'And it shall come to pass,' saith God, 'when the seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation for their iniquity;' Jer. xxv. 11, 12. The church knew not when they began, or when they would end, but this they knew, that the same day they were accomplished, it should be as God had said; and so it was.

The fixing and computing of the time of the man of sin, of antichrist, by days, and months, and years, is to secure our faith in the punctual determination of the season, but not to satisfy our curiosity when the season should be. But the consideration of this, that there is such a time, or a determinate season, is a great foundation of faith and patience. Isa. lx. 22. 'A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation; I the Lord will hasten it in his time.' But if there be a fixed time for the accomplishment of this promise, you may ask, how can it then be hastened? Why, if you live in the exercise of faith and patience, it shall surprise you; it shall come when you do not think it will, nor expect it. 'I will hasten it in its time.' I will not bring it before its time, be ye never so patient, or impatient; but exercise faith and patience, and I will so order it, that it shall be a sweet surprisal unto you. And it is a means of patience; Hab. ii. 3. 'If the vision seem to tarry, wait for

it, for it will surely come.' When we know it will come, when we know there is such a determinate time, and that it will surely come, it is a great ground of patience to wait for it. This is a great consideration with me, and I leave it with you. Here I can exercise faith without fancy, or conjecture, that there is a certain determinate time in the counsel of God, wherein he will pour out all his judgments and plagues upon the antichristian world, until antichristianism be destroyed, and rooted out.

(2.) Another thing that comforts my heart is this; It is no less glorious to suffer under the beast and the false prophet, than it was to suffer under the dragon. The book of the Revelation is chiefly made up of these two things, of the persecutions of the church, one by the dragon, and he is conquered; the other by the beast and false prophet, and he shall be conquered. The dragon was the heathen power of the Roman empire; and it was a glorious thing to suffer under that power. They that did so, are described, Rev. vii. 13—15. 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.' And of those that suffered under the beast and the false prophet, it is said, Rev. xii. 11. 'That by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, they overcame him.' We account them great and glorious persons, who won the liberty of the gospel, and the Christian religion, by suffering against the pagan power; and who destroyed all idolatry by their blood, starving and 'famishing all the gods of the heathen;' Zeph. ii. 11. Never were men more glorious than they. These made up the 'Turba palmifera,' that is, the company who, with palms in their hands, and a new song in their mouths, give glory unto God; Rev. vii. 9—12. I say, it is not less glorious to suffer under the beast and false prophet, the second persecuting power, that is, the papal antichristian power, than it was before under the pagan. This the church hath for many ages conflicted withal, and must continue to do so, until the time is come, when they shall have a perfect and complete conquest over this also. It is a glorious thing, and I would have you reckon

upon it as such. If a time of going into Smithfield should again come; if God shall call us to that fiery trial, or any other, whatever it may be, remember, that to suffer against antichrist, is as great and glorious, as to suffer against paganism.

(3.) Though our persons fall, our cause shall be as truly, certainly and infallibly victorious, as that Christ sits at the right hand of God. Among the heathens, men of courage did not value their own lives, so their cause was carried on. Now, however your persons, or my person, may fall in this trial; yet the cause, in which we are engaged, shall as surely conquer as Christ is alive; and shall prevail at last. Upon the first rise of the beast, it is said, Rev. xiii. 7. 'He made war with the saints, and overcame them.' The poor Waldenses looked upon themselves to be the people there prophesied of; and said, when they were under the butcheries of the papal power, 'We are the conquered people of God, but there shall come forth conquerors.' When going to die, they knew and believed their cause would conquer. And so, after antichrist hath conquered and prevailed over persons for a season, at length it will come to a final issue. 'They shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful;' Rev. xvii. 14. The gospel shall be victorious. This is the third thing that greatly comforts and refreshes me, that if God should give me the honour, the strength, and grace to die in this cause, my cause shall be victorious, as sure as if I had the crown in my hand.

(4.) The judgments of God shall come upon the antichristian world, when they look not for them: when the kings of the earth do not look for them; yea, when believers themselves do not look for them, they shall come so suddenly. The Holy Ghost saith so expressly, Rev. xviii. 8. 'Her plagues shall come in one day, death and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire.' How is it possible, that she that is in the state and condition wherein she is, should have her plagues come upon her in one day? The reason is added, 'For strong is the Lord God that judgeth her.' Almighty strength shall be put forth for the accomplishing of it. And if this be not enough, the

seventeenth verse tells you, 'that it shall come in one hour.' And I do verily believe, that the destruction of this cursed antichristian state (of the head of it), will be brought about by none of those means we see, or know of; but that the strong Lord God shall break in upon her, and destroy her, by ways unknown to us. It may be to-morrow, it may be not these hundred years. She herself, when it is done, shall look for no such thing; ver. 7. 'She glorified herself, and lived deliciously; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore her plagues shall come on her in one day.' When she is boasting herself, destruction shall come; when the kings of the earth shall have no expectation of it; for they shall cry, ver. 16. 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city; for in one hour so great riches is come to nought.' And believers themselves will be such as the children of Israel in Egypt; when Moses came, they could not believe, because of the cruel bondage they were under: it is like the day wherein God's judgments will come upon antichrist, the old enemies of Jesus Christ.

(5.) I would consider very much with myself, the greatness of the indignation of God against those that shall in the least comply with antichristianism, when it doth come upon us. In Rev. xiii. 11. there is mention of 'a beast that had two horns, like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon (which I think is the pope), and he exercises all the power of the first beast;' that is, he exercises a power answerable to the pagan power. And what then? ver. 16. 'He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark.' No matter what the mark is; but to receive any thing of him, is to receive his mark, either in our foreheads, where we shall shew it unto all the world; or in our right hands, more privately, where it may be shewn when opportunity serves. What then? Why, in chap. xiv. 6, 7. 'I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven

and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.' When antichrist would bring his mark on the foreheads of the people, and into their hands, God, by his gospel, calls men from their false worship and idolatry. But what if they do not obey? The ninth and tenth verses tell us, 'A third angel followed, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receives his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb,' &c. Some will be apt to say, Let us make a fair composition, and use some compliance to put an end to these disputes. No, do it at your peril; God saith, you shall drink of the wine of his wrath, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and that for ever and ever. And I believe, with all my heart and soul, that this will be the portion of all the men and women in this nation, that shall comply with any return of antichristian idolatry among us; God shall pour out his indignation upon them.

(6.) Remember, that if the trial comes, it is a day of battle; and it is not for you, when you should just engage in a battle, to be considering of this or that way, or contrivance to escape; no, it is courage and constancy, and faith alone must be set on work, or you will not be preserved. All your wisdom and contrivances will not preserve you; but it being come to the issue between Christ and antichrist, 'it is the girding up the loins of your mind, and a resisting unto blood against sin,' and abiding in it, that is your duty, and must preserve you. Nothing will save you but faith, courage, and constancy.

(7.) There are, in the Scripture, intimations, that those who, in an especial manner, cleave unto God and his worship, with faith, love, and delight, shall be preserved and saved.' I do not propose this unto you as an object of your faith; all the rest I do; but I say, there are intimations that give me some satisfaction, that they who with quick and lively spirits do act faith, and love, and delight in God and his worship, or that are worshippers in the inner court of the temple, shall be peculiarly secured at such a time.

But I am afraid few of us shall have it, because I see so much coldness and deadness grown generally upon us, and the churches of Christ; it makes me think exercises will come upon us all; for we have need of them.

To conclude,

First, Let not your talk about strange things, keep the thoughts of these things you have been hearing out of your hearts; for you will be tried with antichristianism before you die. We talk of news, and great things we look for in the world, and that antichrist shall be destroyed; and so he will; but I do believe he will try us sorely in the mean time.

Secondly, Take heed of computations. How wofully and wretchedly have we been mistaken by this! We know the time is determined; its beginning and ending is known to God; and we must live by faith till the accomplishment.

Thirdly, So many of us as have afresh engaged ourselves in covenant unto God, let us remember that we have taken the 'márk of God upon our foreheads;' and it will ill become us to set the mark of antichrist by it.

This is all I have to offer unto you as to living by faith, under the apprehensions of those difficulties we have to conflict withal, in reference to the coming in of profaneness and idolatry wherewith we are threatened, by hell and the world, who are at this day combining together to bring them again upon this nation.

SERMON XIII.*

THE USE OF FAITH IN A TIME OF GENERAL DECLENSION IN RELIGION.

The just shall live by his faith.—HAB. ii. 4.

I AM now come to the last thing that was proposed to be spoken to, and with which I shall shut up the subject, viz.

3. How we may live by faith, under an apprehension of great and woful decays in churches, in church members, in professors of all sorts; and in the gradual withdrawing of the glory of God from us all on that account.

I would speak unto three things:

(1.) That this is such a time of decay among us, among churches, among church members, and professors of all sorts and ways throughout this nation; yea, and other nations too, where there are any that fear God.

(2.) That this is, and ought to be, a cause of great trouble and trial unto all that are true believers. And then,

(3.) I shall shew you, how we may live by faith in such a season. What it is faith will do to support the soul at such a time.

(1.) That it is now such a time of decay; there are too many evidences of it. I will name a few things.

[1.] A sense of it is impressed upon the minds of all the most judicious and diligent Christians, that do abound most in self-examination, or do take most notice of the ways of God. Multitudes have I heard testifying of it; complaints are received from many in this nation, and the neighbouring nations, that there is a great decay, as to the power of grace and life of faith, among all sorts of professors. And some of them will go farther in their evidence, and tell us, that they find the effects of it in themselves; that they find it a matter of great difficulty, requiring great watchfulness, and great diligence in any measure to keep up themselves

* This sermon was preached May 21, 1680.

unto their former frames; and when they have done all, they do not attain their desire. And to increase this evidence, we are all convinced of it, or else we are notorious hypocrites; for I know not how often I have heard it prayed over in this very place. So that there is sent forth from God a conviction upon the hearts and minds of spiritual, self-examining believers, that churches, church members, professors, and themselves, are under spiritual decays. This is the first evidence: and therefore, in such a season, it was the best part of the church that made that sad complaint; Isa. lxiii. 17. 'O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?' They were sensible, that there was a judgment of the hand of God upon them.

[2.] The open want of love that is among churches, among church members, among professors, is another evidence of decay. I will not speak of the want of love among churches, one to another. But as to love among church members, we have scarce the shadow of it remaining among us. Where men have relations, where they have acquaintance, where they have been old friends, where they agree in a humour, and converse, there is an appearance of love; and where they agree in a party and faction, there is an appearance of love; but upon the pure spiritual account of Christianity and church membership, we have, I say, scarce the shadow of it left among us. I remember how it was with us, when it was a joy of heart to behold the face of one another, wherein there was love without dissimulation, in sincerity, love attended with pity, compassion, condescension, yea, love attended with delight. But it is dead in churches, dead among professors.

[3.] Another evidence of this decay, is want of delight and diligence in the ordinances of gospel worship. These ordinances were wont to be a joy of heart unto all that feared God; but now there is so much deadness, coldness, and indifferency, so much undervaluing of the word, selfulness, pride, and so much an apprehension that we know every thing, so little endeavour to tremble at every truth, by what means soever it be brought unto us, as gives a manifest evidence of woful decays that are fallen upon us. Dead preachers! dead hearers! all things now go down

among the churches of God, and professors in these nations. And this is attended with two desperate evils; one of which I heard of but lately, but upon inquiry, I find it to be a far greater evil than I took it to be, viz. Men under an apprehension, that as they do not see others enlivened, nor quickened as they were wont to be, by the ordinances of divine worship, and finding no such thing in their own hearts neither, in all probability finding themselves to grow dead and useless, are fallen into an opinion, that there is an end of them, and that they ought to attend unto them no more. And this doth befall some that have long walked soberly, and with great diligence in the use of ordinances: some in this city, and in other places, are led by foolish delusions to it, because they do not find the spirit, and life, and power of the word and ordinances in themselves, and as they think in others. A godly and learned minister, that shewed me a discourse written upon this subject, in defence of ordinances, did acquaint me with so great a number falling into this abomination, that I did not think it had been possible. This is one of the evils.

The other evil that attends it is this, That this deadness and indifferency unto ordinances, and want of bringing our necks to the yoke of Christ therein, against all disputings and arguings of flesh and blood, hath taken such place among us, and proceeded so far, that all ways of reformation are useless. Men may make divisions, and do I know not what, but this I know, there is no way of obtaining any reformation, but for men to engage their hearts to return unto God, in more delight in his service than there hath been. Some utterly forsake the assemblies, some come with great indifferency, using their liberty, off and on, at their pleasure. Are not these things evidences of great decays among us? To me they are. I speak not as to this congregation in particular, but as to the state of all churches that I know or can hear of in these nations.

[4.] The last evidence I shall mention of these decays among us, is our worldly-mindedness, conformity to the world, and security. These things have been so often spoken to you, and no reformation hath ensued, that now they are looked upon as words of course; and I am discouraged from speaking of them any more. But assure yourselves,

this conformity to the world, and this security that is yet found among us, is a great evidence, that the glory of God is departing from us. Ministers preach against worldly-mindedness, security, &c. but it makes no impression upon the minds of men; for we can scarce give an instance of any the least reformation. These things plainly demonstrate, that we are all under great decays.

(2.) A sense of this general decay among churches, church members and professors, ought to be an exercise and concern unto our minds. If we think all is well with us, and are satisfied, while we are free from outward troubles, and not concern ourselves about our decays, I will not say we are hypocrites, but truly we are poor, low, dead, carnal, unspiritual Christians. I thought to have spoken to these three heads; to shew you,

[1.] How God is dishonoured by this general decay.

[2.] How the world is offended and scandalized at it.

[3.] How the ruin of churches is hastened by it, which will befall them assuredly, unless God recover us out of this bad state. But I shall waive these things, and proceed.

(3.) Suppose it be thus, and we do complain of it to one another, not knowing what the issue will be, nor what it may come unto, How shall we live by faith under this consideration? What is the work of faith in this state? If things are so (and I wish any one could evidence they are not; but suppose for once that they are so), and our souls are burdened with an apprehension that they are so; then what will faith do to enable us to pass through this exercise, and to live to God?

I shall tell you something of what I find. And if God help you not to better things, make use of these, and improve them, that you may give glory to God, by believing under this condition also.

[1.] Faith will mind the soul, that notwithstanding this also, yet Christ hath built his church upon that rock, that it shall not be utterly prevailed against. The promise, saith faith, extends itself as well to the inbred adversaries of our own souls, unbelief, deadness, and all these things, as to our outward enemies; Matt. xvi. 18. 'I will build my church upon this rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Though we were all dead, helpless, lifeless,

poor creatures; though we had retained almost nothing but outward order, and had lost the very vigour and essence of faith and obedience, yet Christ's church shall abide, and stand, and those that belong to him shall be preserved. Such and such are turned apostates, saith the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 19. 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' Here is my ground of hope notwithstanding all this, though one falls after another, though one decays after another, 'nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure,' and it hath a seal upon it, 'God knoweth who are his.' Every one whom he hath effectually called, and built upon the rock Jesus Christ, shall be preserved, whatever befalls the residue of the world. To see such a confluence of all manner of dangerous evils from without, as are coming this day upon the church of God, and to see, in the mean time, so many evidences of a decaying spiritual state in believers themselves, it will put faith to exercise itself upon this promise of Christ, 'I have built my church upon the rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' If you find your spirits at any time pressed with these things, if nothing better occurs at hand, exercise faith upon this promise of Christ, and upon the firm standing of the foundation of God, that he knoweth who are his, and will carry them through all these difficulties, and land them safe in eternity.

[2.] Faith will also mind the soul, that God hath yet the fulness and residue of the Spirit, and can pour it out when he pleases, to recover us from this woful state and condition, and to renew us to holy obedience unto himself. There are more promises of God's giving supplies of his Spirit to deliver us from inward decays, than there are for the putting forth the acts of his power to deliver us from our outward enemies. And God is as able to do the inward work, to revive and renew a spirit of faith, love, and holiness, of meekness, humility, self-denial, and readiness for the cross: he is able, with one word and act of his grace, to renew it, as he is able, by one act of his power, to destroy all his enemies, and make them the footstool of Christ when he pleases. Live in the faith of this.

The psalmist saith, in Psal. cxlvii. 16, 17. 'He sends forth his hoary frost,' and the issue is, the earth is frozen;

he brings a death upon it. But, saith he, in Psal. civ. 30. 'Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and renewest the face of the earth.' In like manner there is deadness upon all churches and professors in some measure at this time; but God, who hath the fulness of the Spirit, can send him forth, and renew the face of the soul; can give professors and profession another face, not to trim and trick, as now so often is done, not so high and haughty, not so earthly and worldly, as is now so much seen, but humble, meek, holy, broken-hearted, and self-denying. God can send forth his Spirit when he pleases, and give all our churches and professors a new face, in the verdure and flourishing of his grace in them. When God will do this I know not; but I believe God can do this; he is able to do it, able to renew all his churches, by sending out supplies of the Spirit, whose fulness is with him, to recover them in the due and appointed time; and more I believe truly, that when God hath accomplished some ends upon us, and hath stained the glory of all flesh, he will renew the power and glory of religion among us again, even in this nation. I believe it truly, but not as I believe the other things I have mentioned unto you, for those I believe absolutely; namely, that Christ hath built his church upon a rock, and that nothing shall ever finally prevail against it; and that God hath the fulness and the residue of the Spirit to renew us again, to all the glory of profession and holy obedience. These I propose as truths that are infallible, that will not fail you, and upon which you may venture your souls to eternity. And if your faith in these things will not give you support and comfort, I know not what else will.

[3.] When your souls are perplexed within you about these things, your faith will say unto you, 'O my soul, why art thou cast down?' Are not all these things foretold thee? 1 Tim. iv. 1. 'That in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.' 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. 'That perilous days shall come, because men should have a form of godliness, but deny the power.' Hath it not been foretold that churches shall decay, and lose their first faith and love, in examples that have been set before you? Why are you surprised? saith our Saviour, John xvi. 4. 'I have told you these things, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.' I was never nearer a surprisal than by this one thing, how it

could possibly be, that after so many instructions, after so many mercies, trials, fears, after so many years carrying our lives in our hands, and so many glorious deliverances, that there should yet be decays found amongst us, and such going backward: it is a great surprisal to one that considers it aright. But seeing it is foretold that so it shall be, let us live by faith; God hath some great end to accomplish out of it, and then all will be well. 'When I have accomplished my whole work upon mount Zion,' saith God, 'then,' &c. Isa. x. 12.

[4.] And lastly, Faith, if it be in exercise, will put every soul in whom it is upon an especial attendance unto those duties God calls him unto in such a season. This accomplishes and completes our living by faith under such a trial as this is. If faith be in us, and in exercise, it will put us upon all these duties that God requires of us in such a season.

1st. It will put us upon self-examination, how far we ourselves are engaged in these decays, and have contracted the guilt of them.

2dly. It will put us upon great mourning, by reason of God's withdrawing himself from us.

3dly. It will put us upon watchfulness over ourselves, and over one another, that we be not overtaken by the means and causes of these decays. It will put us,

4thly. Upon zeal for God and the honour of the gospel, that it may not suffer by reason of our miscarriages.

In one word, faith will do something; but for our parts, we do little or nothing. Faith will do something, I say, wherever it is, when it is stirred up to exercise. But as to these special duties, in reference to these decays that all professors are fallen under; O how little is it we do in any kind whatever. Would we might advise with one another what to do under these decays, to further one another in recovering ourselves from them. This then is what we are called to, and is required of us, viz. faith in the faithfulness of Christ, who hath built his church upon the rock, that, be things never so bad, it shall not be prevailed against. Faith in the fulness of the Spirit, and his promise to send him to renew the face of the church. Faith in apprehending the truth of God, who hath foretold these things. And faith putting us upon those especial duties, that God requires at our hands in such a season.

TWENTY-FIVE

DISCOURSES

SUITABLE TO

THE LORD'S SUPPER:

DELIVERED JUST BEFORE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THAT SACRED ORDINANCE.

[FIRST PUBLISHED 1760.]

enable you, when the hour of death approaches, to rejoice in the full prospect of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the prayer,

Madam,

Of your affectionate and obedient servant,

RICHARD WINTER.

Tooke's-court, Cursitor-street,
March 4, 1760.

PREFACE.

THE preceding dedication is sufficient to acquaint the public, that these Sacramental Discourses are the genuine productions of that great man of God, Doctor John Owen, who was for some time in the last age vice-chancellor of Oxford. They enter the world through the same channel as his Thirteen Sermons on various Occasions, published four years since, viz. They were at first taken in short-hand from the Doctor's mouth, and by the late Sir John Hartopp, baronet, Mrs. Cook's pious grandfather, were transcribed into long-hand.

Mr. Matthew Henry has this note in his Annotations on 2 Kings ii. 'There are remains of great and good men, which, like Elijah's mantle, ought to be gathered up, and preserved by the survivors; their sayings, their writings, their examples; that as their works follow them in the reward of them, they may stay behind in the benefit of them.' Not that our faith is to stand in the wisdom of men; the Bible alone is the standard of truth; and there we are bid to go by the footsteps of the flock; and to keep the paths of the righteous. There is a strange itch in the minds of men after novelties; and it is too common a case, that they who are for striking out something new in divinity, are ready to pour contempt on the valuable writings of those who are gone before them; and even the most learned, peaceable, and pious men shall not escape their unrighteous censures. This is notorious in the conduct of those who embrace the new scheme.

If we inquire of the former age, we shall find there flourished in it some of the greatest and best of men,

for whose printed works many acknowledge they have abundant cause to bless God to eternity. Among these the writings of Doctor Owen shine with a peculiar lustre in the judgment of judicious Christians; and I am persuaded they who peruse them with the spirit of love and of a sound mind, will be as far from asserting, that in his manner of maintaining the doctrine of faith, his right arm appeared to be weakened, as from saying, that his right eye was darkened, and unable to discern the object of it.

As to the following discourses, which the Doctor calls Familiar Exercises, they are now printed in hopes they will be made useful, through the divine blessing, to assist the meditations of Christians, of all denominations, in their approaches to the Lord's table, seeing they are so well adapted to answer that sacred purpose.

DISCOURSE I.*

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—2 Cor. v. 21.

I shall not enter into the opening of this Scripture, but only propose some few things that may be a suitable subject for your present meditation.

There are three things concerning God the Father; three things concerning the Son; and three things concerning ourselves, all in these words that I have mentioned, and all suitable for us to be acting faith upon.

I. I would remember, if the Lord help me, the sovereignty of God the Father, his justice, and his grace. His sovereignty; 'he made him:' God the Father made him. His justice; 'he made him to be sin:' a sacrifice and an offering for sin. And his grace; 'that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ.'

1. The sovereignty of God. I could mention, that this sovereignty of God extends itself to all persons chosen, and shew for whom Christ should be made sin; for he was not made sin for all, but for them who became 'the righteousness of God in him.' Also the sovereignty of God over things, dispensing with the law so far, that he suffered for sin, 'who knew no sin;' and we, who had sinned, were let go free. The sovereignty of God in appointing the Son to this work; 'he made him;' for none else could. He was the servant of the Father; so that the whole foundation of this great transaction lies in the sovereignty of God over persons and things, in reference unto Christ. Let us then remember to bow down to the sovereignty of God in this ordinance of the Lord's supper.

2. There is the justice of God. 'He made him to be sin,' imputed sin unto him, reckoned unto him all the sins of the elect, caused all our sins to meet upon him, made him a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin, laid all the punishment of our sins upon him. To this end he sent him forth to be a pro-

* Delivered October 10, 1669.

pitiation for sin, to declare his righteousness. The Lord help us to remember, that his righteousness is in a special manner exalted by the death of Christ. He would not save us any other way but by making him sin.

3. There is the grace of God manifests itself in the aim and design of God in all this matter. What did God aim at? It was 'that we might become the righteousness of God in him;' that we might be made righteous, and freed from sin.

II. There are three things that lie clear in the words, that we may call to remembrance, concerning the Son. There is his innocency, his purity; 'he knew no sin.' There is his sufferings; he was 'made to be sin.' And there is his merit; it was 'that we might become the righteousness of God in him.' Here is another object for faith to meditate upon.

1. There are many things in Scripture that direct us to thoughts of the spotless purity, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, when we think of his sufferings. A lamb of God, 'without spot.' He did no sin, nor had any guile in his mouth. He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' Faith should call this to mind in the sufferings of Christ, that 'he knew no sin.' That expression sets sin at the greatest distance from Jesus Christ.

2. The sufferings of Christ; 'he was made sin;' a comprehensive word, that sets out his whole sufferings. Look, whatever the justice of God, the law of God, whatever the threatenings of God did require to be inflicted as a punishment for sin, Christ underwent it all. They are dreadful apprehensions that we ourselves have, or can take in concerning the issue and effect of sin, from the wrath of God, when under convictions, and not relieved by the promises of the gospel. But we see not the thousandth part of the evil of sin, that follows inseparably from the righteousness and holiness of God. The effects of God's justice for sin will no more enter into our hearts fully to apprehend, than the effects of his grace and glory will; yet, whatever it was, Christ underwent it all.

3. Then there is the merit of Christ, which is another object of faith that we should call over in the celebration of

this ordinance. Why was he made sin? It was 'that we might become the righteousness of God in him.' It is answerable to that other expression in Gal. iii. 13, 14. He hath borne the curse, 'was made a curse for us.' To what end? That 'the blessing of faithful Abraham might come upon us;' or, that we might be completely made righteous. The design of our assembling together, is to remember how we come to be made righteous; it is, by Christ's being made sin.

III. We may see three things concerning ourselves.

1. Our own sin and guilt: he was made sin 'for us.' If Christ was made sin for us, then we were sinners.

2. We may remember our deliverance; how we were delivered from sin, and all the evils of it. It was not by a word of command, or power, or by the interposition of saints or angels, or by our own endeavours; but by the sufferings of the Son of God. And,

3. God would have us remember and call to mind the state whereinto we are brought, which is a state of righteousness; that we may bless him for that which in this world will issue in our righteousness, and in the world to come, eternal glory.

These things we may call over for our faith to meditate upon. Our minds are apt to be distracted; the ordinance is to fix them: and if we act faith in an especial manner in this ordinance, God will be glorified.

DISCOURSE II.*

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?—1 Cor. x. 16.

There is, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, an especial and peculiar communion with Christ in his body and blood to be obtained. One reason why we so little value the ordinance, and profit so little by it, may be, because we understand so little of the nature of that special communion with Christ, which we have therein.

* Delivered November 26, 1669.

We have this special communion upon the account of the special object that faith is exercised upon in this ordinance, and the special acts that it puts forth in reference to that, or those objects. For the acts follow the special nature of their objects. Now,

1. The special object of faith, as acted in this ordinance, is not the object of faith, as faith; that is, the most general object of it, which is the divine veracity. 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true;' John iii. 33. The divine veracity, or the truth of God, that is the formal object of faith, as faith; and makes our faith to be divine faith. But now this is not the special object of faith in this ordinance, but something that doth suppose that.

2. The special object of faith, as justifying, is not the special object of faith in this ordinance. The special object of faith, as justifying, is the promise, and Christ in the promise, in general, as 'the Saviour of sinners:' so when the apostle called men 'to repent and believe,' he tells them, 'The promise is to you;' Acts ii. 38. And, I suppose, I need not insist upon the proof of this, that the promise, and Christ in the promise, as Saviour and Redeemer, is the object of faith, as it is justifying. But this also is supposed in the actings of faith in this ordinance; which is peculiar, and gives us peculiar communion with Christ. Therefore,

3. The special and peculiar object of faith, the immediate object of it in this ordinance, in its largest extent is,

1. The human nature of Christ, as the subject wherein mediation and redemption was wrought. Christ is considered to come as a sacrifice; that is laid down as the foundation of it, Psal. xl. 6. Heb. x. 5. 'A body hast thou prepared me;' which is synecdochically taken for the whole human nature. Faith, when it would lead itself unto the sacrifice of Christ, which is here represented, doth in an especial manner consider the human nature of Christ; that God prepared him a body for that end. This we are to have peculiar regard unto, when we come to the administration, or participation of this ordinance; for that end we now celebrate it. Nay,

2. Faith goes farther, and doth not consider merely the human nature of Christ, but considers it as distinguished into its integral parts, into body and blood; both which

have a price, value, and virtue given unto them by their union with his human soul; for both the body of Christ and the blood of Christ, upon which the work of our redemption is put in Scripture, have their value and worth from their relation unto his soul; as soul and body, making the human nature, had its value and worth from its relation unto the Son of God: otherwise, he saith of his body, 'Handle it, it is but flesh and bones.' But where the body of Christ is mentioned, and the blood of Christ is mentioned, there is a distribution of the human nature, into its integral parts, each part retaining its relation to his soul, and from thence is its value and excellency. This is the second peculiar in the object of faith in this ordinance.

3. There is more than this; they are not only considered as distinguished, but as separate also; the blood separate from the body, the body left without the blood. This truth our apostle, in this chapter and the next, doth most signally insist upon; viz. the distinct parts of this ordinance, one to represent the body, and the other to represent the blood; that faith may consider them as separate.

The Papists, we know, do sacrilegiously take away the cup from the people: they will give them the bread, but they will not give them the cup: and as it always falls out, that one error must be covered with another, or else it will keep no man dry under it; they have invented the doctrine of concomitance: that there is a concomitance, that is, whole Christ is in every kind, in the bread, and in the wine; the one doth accompany the other; which is directly to overthrow the ordinance upon another account, as it is to represent Christ's body and blood as separated one from the other. Our Lord Jesus blessed the bread and the cup, and said, 'This is my body;' which cannot be spoken distinctly, unless supposed to be separate.

Here then is a threefold limitation of the act of faith, even in this ordinance, in a peculiar manner restraining it to a special communion with God in Christ; that it hath a special regard to the human nature of Christ: to his human nature, as consisting of body and blood; and as it respects them as separated body and blood.

Yea, 4. It respects them as separate in that manner. You all along know that I do not intend these objects of

faith as the ultimate object; for it is the person of Christ that faith rests in; but those immediate objects that faith is exercised about, to bring it to rest in God: it is exercised about the manner of this separation; that is, the blood of Christ comes to be distinct, by being shed; and the body of Christ comes to be separate, by being bruised and broken. All the instituted sacrifices of old did signify this, a violent separation of body and blood; the blood was let out with the hand of violence, and so separated, and then sprinkled upon the altar, and then towards the holy place; and then the body was burned distinct by itself. So the apostle tells us, 'It is the cup which we bless, and the bread which we break;' the cup is poured out, as well as the bread broken, to remind faith of the violent separation of the body and blood of Christ. From this last consideration of faith acting itself upon the separation of the body and blood of Christ, by way of violence, it is led to a peculiar acting of itself upon all the causing of it; whence it was that this body and this blood of Christ was represented thus separate; and by inquiring into the cause of it, it finds a moving cause, a procuring cause, an efficient cause, and a final cause; which it ought to exercise itself peculiarly upon always in this ordinance.

(1.) A moving cause; and that is, the eternal love of God, in giving Christ in this manner, to have his body bruised, and his blood shed. The apostle, going to express the love of God towards us, tells you it was in this, 'That he spared not his own Son;' Rom. viii. 32. One would have thought, that the love of God might have wrought in sending his Son into the world; but it also wrought in not sparing of him. Thus faith is called in this ordinance to exercise itself upon that love which gives out Christ not to be spared.

(2.) It reflects upon the procuring cause; whence it is or what it is, that hath procured it, that there should be this representation of the separated body and blood of Christ; and this is even our own sin. 'He was delivered for our iniquities,' given for our transgression, died to make reconciliation and atonement for our sins; they were the procuring cause of it, upon such considerations of union and covenant, which I shall not now insist upon. It leads faith, I say, upon a special respect to sin, as the procuring cause of

the death of Christ. A natural conscience on the breach of the law leads the soul to the consideration of sin, as that which exposes itself alone to the wrath of God and eternal damnation; but, in this ordinance, we consider sin as that which exposed Christ to death; which is a peculiar consideration of the nature of sin.

(3.) There is the efficient cause. Whence it was that the body and blood of Christ was thus separated; and that is threefold, principal, instrumental, and adjuvant.

What is the principal efficient cause of the sufferings of Christ? Why, the justice and righteousness of God. 'God sent him forth to be a propitiation to declare his own righteousness;' Rom. iii. 25. Whence it is said, 'He spared him not;' he caused all our sins to meet upon him, 'the chastisement of our peace was upon him.'

Again, There is the instrumental cause; and that is the law of God. Whence did that separation, which is here represented unto us, ensue and flow? It came from the sentence of the law, whereby he was hanged upon the tree.

Moreover the adjuvant cause, was those outward instruments, the wrath and malice of men: 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together;' Acts iv. 27.

Faith considers the cause whence it was that Christ was thus given up, the eternal love of God; the procuring cause was our own sins; and if once faith takes a view of sin, as that which hath nailed Christ to the cross, it will have a blessed effect on the soul; and it considers the efficient cause, which is the justice and righteousness of God. The law of God was the instrument in the hand of righteousness, which was holpen on by those outward instruments, who had a hand in his suffering, but none in his sacrifice.

(4.) Faith considers in this matter the end of this separation of the body and blood of Christ, which is thus represented; and that is ultimately and absolutely the glory of God. He set him forth for 'the declaration of his righteousness;' Rom. iii. 25. Eph. i. 6. God aimed at the glorifying of himself. I could easily manifest unto you, how all the glorious properties of his nature are advanced, exalted, and will be so to eternity, in this suffering of Christ. The sub-

ordinate ends are two; I mean, the subordinate ends of this very peculiar act of separation of the body and blood. [1.] It was to confirm the covenant. Every covenant of old was to be ratified and confirmed by sacrifice; and in confirming the covenant by sacrifice, they divided the sacrifice into two parts, and passed between them before they were offered; and then took it upon themselves, that they would stand to the covenant, which was so confirmed. Jesus Christ, being to confirm the covenant, Heb. ix. 16. the body and blood of Christ, this sacrifice was to be parted, that this covenant might be confirmed. And,

[2.] A special end of it was for the confirming and strengthening of our faith. God gives out unto us the object of our faith in parcels. We are not able to take this great mysterious fruit of God's love in gross, in the lump; and therefore he gives it out, I say, in parcels. We shall have the body broken to be considered; and the blood shed is likewise to be considered. This is the peculiar communion which we have with Christ, in this ordinance; because there are peculiar objects for faith to act itself upon in this ordinance above others.

The very nature of the ordinance itself gives us a peculiar communion; and there are four things that attend the nature of this ordinance that are peculiar. It is commemorative, professional, eucharistical, and federal.

1. The ordinance is commemorative; 'Do this in remembrance of me.' And there is no greater joy to the heart of sinners, and a man knows not how to give greater glory to God, than to call the atonement of sin unto remembrance. It is observed in the offering for jealousy, Numb. v. 15. if a man was jealous, and caused an offering to be brought to God, God allowed neither oil, nor frankincense; and the reason is, 'because it was to bring sin to remembrance. But how sweet is that offering that brings to our remembrance the atonement made for all our sins? That is pleasing and acceptable unto God, and sweet unto the souls of sinners.

2. It has a peculiar profession attending it; saith the apostle, doing this, 'Ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come;' you make a profession and manifestation of it; and give me leave to say it, they that look towards Christ, and do not put themselves in a way of partaking of this ordi-

nance, they refuse the principal part of that profession which God calls them unto in this world. The truth is, we have been apt to content ourselves with a profession of moral obedience; but it is a profession of Christ's institution by which alone we glorify him in this world. I will have my death shewn forth, saith Christ, and not only remembered. The use of this ordinance is to shew forth the death of Christ. As Christ requires of us to shew forth his death, so surely he hath deserved it by his death.

3. It is peculiarly eucharistical: there is a peculiar thanksgiving that ought to attend this ordinance. It is called 'the cup of blessing,' or 'the cup of thanksgiving:' the word Ἐυλογία, is used promiscuously for blessing and thanksgiving. It is called the 'cup of blessing,' because of the institution, and prayer for the blessing of God upon it; and it is called the cup of thanksgiving, because we do, in a peculiar manner, give thanks to God for Christ, and for his love in him.

4. It is a federal ordinance, wherein God confirms the covenant unto us, and wherein he calls us to make a recognition of the covenant unto God. The covenant is once made; but we know that we stand in need that it should be often transacted in our souls, that God should often testify his covenant unto us, and that we should often actually renew our covenant engagements unto him. God never fails, nor breaks his promises; so that he hath no need to renew them, but testify them anew: we break and fail in ours, so that we have need actually to renew them. And that is it which we are called unto in this ordinance, which is the ordinance of the great seal of the covenant in the blood of Christ.

Upon all these accounts have we special communion with Christ in this ordinance. There is none of them but I might easily enlarge upon; but I name these heads; and my design is to help my own faith and yours from roving, in the administration of this ordinance, or from a general acting of itself, to fix it to that which is its particular duty; that we may find no weariness nor heaviness in the administration: here in these things is there enough to entertain us for ever, and to make them new and fresh to us. But while we come with uncertain thoughts, and know not what to

direct our faith to act particularly upon, we lose the benefit of the ordinance,

For the use, it is,

1. To bless God for his institution of his church, which is the seat of the administration of this ordinance, wherein we have such peculiar and intimate communion with Christ. There is not one instance of those which I have named, but if God would help us to act faith upon Christ in a peculiar manner through it, would give new strength and life to our souls. Now in the church we have all this treasure. We lose it, I confess, by our unbelief and disesteem of it, but it will be found to be an inestimable treasure to those that use it, and improve it in a due manner.

2. Doth God give us this favour and privilege, that we should be invited to this special communion with Christ in this ordinance? Let us prepare our hearts for it in the authority of its institution. Let us lay our souls and consciences in subjection to the authority of Christ, who hath commanded these things, and who did it in a signal manner the same night wherein he was betrayed. So that there is a special command of Christ lies upon us; and if we will yield obedience to any of the commands of Christ, then let us yield obedience to this. Prepare your souls for special communion with him then, by subjugating them throughly to the authority of Christ in this ordinance.

3. It will be good for us all to be in a gradual exercising of our faith unto these special things, wherein we have communion with Christ. You have heard sundry particulars: here is an object of your faith that is given to be represented unto you in this ordinance, that God hath prepared Christ a body, that he might be a sacrifice for you, and that this body was afterward distinguished into his body strictly so taken, and his blood separated from it; and this in a design of love from God, as procuring the pardon of our sins, as tending to the glory of God, and the establishing of the covenant. Train up a young faith in the way it should go, and it will not depart from it when old. And new things will be found herein every day to strengthen your faith, and you will find much sweetness in the ordinance itself.

DISCOURSE III.*

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?—1 Cor. x. 16.

I HAVE been treating somewhat about the special communion which believers have with Christ in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. There remains yet something farther to be spoken unto for our direction in this great work and duty; and this is taken from the immediate ends of this ordinance. I spake, as I remember, the last day to the specialty of our communion, from the consideration of the immediate ends of the death of Christ: now I shall speak to it in reference unto the immediate ends of this ordinance, and they are two; one whereof respects our faith and our love, and the other respects our profession; which two make up the whole of what is required of us. For as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 10. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Both these ends, that which respects our faith and love, and that which respects our profession, are mentioned by our apostle in the next chapter; ver. 24. there is mention of that end of this ordinance which respects our faith; now that is recognition. Recognition is a calling over, or a commemoration of the death of Christ; 'Do this,' says he, 'in remembrance of me.' That which respects our profession, is a representation and declaration of the Lord's death; ver. 26. 'When ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shew forth,' ye declare, ye manifest the Lord's death till he come.' These are the two immediate great ends of this ordinance, a recognition of the death of Christ, which respects our faith and love; and a representation of it, which respects our profession; both are required of us.

There is that which respects our faith. The great work of faith is to make things that are absent, present to a soul,

* Delivered December 10, 1669.

in regard to their sweetness, power, and efficacy; whence it is said to be 'the evidence of things not seen;' and it looks backward into the causes of things; and it looks forward unto the effects of things; to what hath wrought out grace, and to what grace is wrought out; and makes them in their efficacy, comfort, and power, to meet and centre in the believing soul.

Now there are three things in reference unto the death of Christ that faith in this ordinance doth recognise, call over, and commemorate. The first is, the faith of Christ in and for his work. The second is, the obedience of Christ. And the third is the work itself.

1. Faith calls over the faith of Christ. Christ had a double faith in reference to his death; one with respect unto himself, and his own interest in God; and the other in respect to the cause whose management he had undertaken, and the success of it. He had faith for both these.

(1.) The Lord Christ had faith in reference to his own person, and to his own interest in God. The apostle declaring, Heb. ii. 14. that because 'the children were partakers of flesh and blood, Christ also did partake of the same,' that so he might die to deliver us from death, brings that text of Scripture, ver. 13. in confirmation of it, which is taken out of Psal. xviii. 2. 'And again,' saith he, 'I will put my trust in him.' How doth this confirm what the apostle produces it for? Why from hence, that in that great and difficult work that Christ did undertake, to deliver and redeem the children, he was all along carried through it by faith and trust in God. 'He trusted in God,' saith he, and that made him undertake it: and he gives a great instance of his faith, when he was departing out of the world. There are three things that stick very close to a departing soul; The giving up of itself; the state wherein it shall be when it is given up; and the final issue of that estate. Our Lord Jesus Christ expressed his faith as to all three of them. As to his departure; Luke xxiii. 46. 'He cried with a loud voice, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' What was his faith as to what would become of him afterward? That also he expresses, Psal. xvi. 10. 'For thou wilt not leave

my soul in hell, neither wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' My soul shall not be left under the state of the dead, whereunto it is going; nor my body see corruption. What was his faith as to the future issue of things? That he expresses, ver. 11. 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life' (which is his faith for his rising again); 'in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;' where he was to be exalted: and these words, 'Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit,' were the first breaking forth of the faith of Christ towards a conquest. He looked through all the clouds of darkness round about him towards the rising sun; through all storms, to the harbour, when he cried those words with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And by the way, it is the highest act of faith upon a stable bottom and foundation, such as will not fail, to give up a departing soul into the hands of God, which Jesus Christ here did for our example. Some die upon presumptions, some in the dark; but faith can go no higher than, upon a sure and stable ground, to give up a departing soul into the hands of God; and that for these reasons, to shew the faith of Christ in this matter.

[1.] Because the soul is then entering into a new state, whereof there are these two properties that will try it to the utmost; that it is invisible, and that it is unchangeable. I say, there are two properties that make this a great act of faith; 1st. The state is invisible. The soul is going into a condition of things that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard;' that nothing can take any prospect into but faith alone. However men may talk of the invisible state of things, which our souls are departing into, it is all but talk, and conjecture, besides what we have by faith. So that to give up a soul cheerfully and comfortably into that state, is a pure act of faith.

2dly. It is unchangeable. It is a state wherein there is no alteration. And though all alterations should prove for the worse, yet it is in the nature of man to hope good from them. But here is no more alteration left: the soul enters into an unchangeable state. And,

[2.] The second reason is, because the total sum of a man's life is now cast up, and he sees what it will come to. While men are trading in the world, though they meet with

some straits and difficulties, yet they have that going on which will bring in something this way, or that way. But, when it comes to this, that they can go no farther, then see how things stand with a departing soul; the whole sum is cast up, there is no more venture to be made, no more advantage to be gained, he must stand as he is. And when a man takes a view of what he is to come to, he needs faith to obtain a comfortable passage out of it. And,

[3.] Even death itself brings a terror with it, that nothing can conquer but faith; I mean, conquer duly. He is not crowned that doth not overcome by faith. It is only to be done through the death of Christ. 'He delivered them that by reason of death were in bondage all their days.' There is no deliverance that is true and real from a bondage-frame of spirit to death, but by faith in Christ.

I touch on this by the way, to manifest the glorious success the faith of Christ had, who, in his dying moment, cried out, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' And this is that we are to call over in the remembering of his death. It is a very great argument the apostle uses to confirm our faith, when speaking of the patriarchs of old; he says, 'All these died in faith.' But that 'all' is nothing to this argument, that Jesus Christ, our head and representative, who went before us, 'He died in faith.' And this is the principal inlet into life, immortality, and glory, the consideration of the death of Christ, dying in that faith, that he gave up his soul into the hands of God, and was persuaded God would 'not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption;' but that he would shew him the 'path of life,' and bring him to his 'right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.'

(2.) Christ had a faith for the cause wherein he was engaged. He was engaged in a glorious cause, a great undertaking, to deliver all the elect of God from death, hell, Satan and sin; to answer the law, to undergo the curse, and to bring his many children unto glory. And dreadful oppositions lay against him in this his undertaking. See what faith he had for his cause, Isa. l. 7—9. 'The Lord will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will con-

tend with me? Who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?' Who is my adversary? or (as in the Hebrew), who is the master of my cause? I have a cause to plead, who is the master of it? I am engaged in a great cause, saith he, and I am greatly opposed; they seek to make me ashamed, to confound me, to condemn me. But here is faith for his cause; 'the Lord God will justify me,' saith he. It was with Christ as it would have been with us under the covenant of works; man ought to have believed he should be justified of God, though not by Jesus Christ; so here, he had faith that he should be justified. God will justify me, I shall not be condemned in this cause that I have undertaken.

It is matter of great comfort and support, to consider, that when the Lord Jesus Christ had in his eye all the sins of all the elect upon the one hand, and the whole curse of the law and the wrath of God on the other, yet he cried, 'I shall not be confounded,' I shall go through it, I shall see an end of this business, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness; and God will justify me in it. We are in an especial manner to call to remembrance the faith that Christ had for his cause; and we ought to have the same faith for it now, for this great conquest of overcoming the devil, sin, death, hell, and the saving of our souls: he hath given us an example for it.

There is one objection lies against all this, and that is this; But did not Christ despond in his great agony in the garden, when he cried three times, 'Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me?' And in that dreadful outcry upon the cross which he took from the twenty-second Psalm, a prophecy of him, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Doth not Christ seem to repent here, and to despond?

I answer, In this difficult inquiry two things are to be stated; First, In reference to his person, that it was impossible Christ should have the indissolubility of his personal union utterly hid from him. He knew the union of his human nature unto the Son of God could not be utterly dissolved, that could not be utterly hid from him; so that there could not be despair, properly so called, in Christ. And,

secondly, This is certain also, that the contract he had with the Father, and the promises he had given him of being successful, could never utterly be hid from him. So that his faith, either as to his person or cause, could not possibly be utterly ruined: but there was a severe and terrible conflict in the human nature, arising from these four things:

First, From the view which he was exalted to take of the nature of the curse that was then upon him. For the curse was upon him, Gal. iii. 13. 'He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' Give me leave to say, Jesus Christ saw more into the nature of the curse of God for sin, than all the damned in hell are able to see; which caused a dreadful conflict in his human soul upon that prospect.

Secondly, It arose from hence, that the comforting influences of the union with the divine nature were restrained. Jesus Christ was, in himself, 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' But yet all the while there were the influences of light and glory from the divine nature to the human by virtue of their union; and now they are restrained, and instead of that, was horrible darkness, and trembling, and the curse, and sin, and Satan round about him; all presenting themselves unto him: which gave occasion to that part of his prayer, Psal. xxii. 12—21. 'Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth,' &c. There was the sword in the curse of the law, and the dog and the lion, or Satan, as it were, gaping upon him, as if ready to devour him; for it was the hour and power of darkness, dread and terror. Besides, there were cruel men, which he compares to 'the bulls of Bashan,' which rent him. This caused that terrible conflict.

Thirdly, It was from the penal desertion of God. That he was under a penal desertion from God, is plain; 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And when I say so, I know little of what I say, I mean, what it is to be under such penal desertion. For the great punishment of hell, is an everlasting penal desertion from God.

Fourthly, It was from the unspeakable extremity of the things that he suffered. Not merely as to the things themselves, which outwardly fell upon his body; but as unto

that 'sword of God, which was awakened against him,' and which had pierced him to the very soul. The advantage which he had in his sufferings by his divine union, was that which supported and bore him up under that weight which would have sunk any mere creature to nothing. His heart was enlarged to receive in those pains, that dread and terror, that otherwise he could not have received. And notwithstanding all this, as I shewed before, Christ kept up his faith in reference to his person, and kept up his faith in reference to his cause; and a great example he hath given unto us, that though the dog and the lion should encompass us, though we should have desertion from God, and pressures more than nature is able to bear, yet there is a way of keeping up faith, trust and confidence through all, and not to let go our hold of God.

Now this is the first thing we are to call over in remembrance of Christ, in reference to his death: that faith he had, both for his person and his cause, in his death. For if you remember any of the martyrs that died, you will stick upon these two things, more than upon the flames that consumed them; they expressed great faith of their interest in Christ; and in reference to the cause they died for. They are things you will remember. And this you are to remember of him, who was the head of the martyrs, our Lord Jesus Christ's faith.

2. We are to call over 'his obedience in his death.' The apostle doth propose it unto us, Phil. ii. 5, 6, &c. 'Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who, when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' We are to call over the mind of Christ in suffering. And the following things the Scripture doth peculiarly direct us to consider in the obedience of Christ unto death: The principle of it, which was love; readiness to and for it; submission under it; his patience during it. They are things the Scripture minds us concerning the obedience of Christ in his death.

(1.) Consider his love, which is one of the principal things to be regarded in this obedience of Christ. The love wherewith it was principled; Gal. ii. 20. 'He loved me,'

saith the apostle, 'and gave himself for me.' 1 John iii. 16. 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' It was his love did it; Rev. i. 5. 'Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' This gives life to the whole sufferings of Christ, and to our faith too. It was a high act of obedience to God, that he laid down his life; but that obedience was principled with love to us.

And now, I pray God to enable me to consider this with my own soul, what that love would stick at that did not stick at this kind of death we have been speaking of. If Jesus Christ had reserved the greatest thing he was to do for us unto the last, we had not known but his love might have stuck when it come to that; I mean, when it came to the curse of the law, though he had done other things. But having done this, he that would not withdraw, nor take off from that, because he loved us, what will he stick at for the future? Our hearts are apt to be full of unkind and unthankful thoughts towards him, as though upon every dark and black temptation and trial he would desert us, whose love was such as he would not do it when himself was to be deserted and made a curse. Call over then the love of Christ in this obedience. Yes; but love prevails sometimes, you will say, with many, to do things that they have no great mind to. We come very difficultly to do some things, when yet out of love we will not deny them. But it was not so with Christ; his love was such that he had,

(2.) An eternal readiness unto his work. There are two texts of Scripture inform us of it; Prov. viii. 30, 31. where the Holy Ghost describes the prospect that the wisdom of God, that is, the Son of God took of the world, and the children of men, in reference to the time he was to come among them; 'I was,' saith he, 'daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.' He considered what work he had to do for the sons of men, and delighted in it. The fortieth Psalm expounds this, ver. 6—8. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,' &c. Sacrifice and burnt-offering

will not take away sin, saith he; 'Then, lo, I come.' But doth he come willingly? Yes, 'I delight,' saith he, 'to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.' What part of the will of God was it? The apostle tells you, Heb. x. 10. 'Offering the body of Jesus Christ once for all; by which will we are sanctified.' He came not only willingly, but with delight. The baptism he was to be baptized with, he was straitened till it was accomplished. The love he had unto the souls of men, that great design and project he had for the glory of God, gave him delight in his undertaking, notwithstanding all the difficulties he was to meet with.

(3.) We are to remember his submission to the great work he was called unto. This he expresses, Isa. l. 5, 6. 'The Lord,' saith he, 'hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.' The Lord God called him to it, and he was not rebellious, but submitted unto it.

There is one objection arises against this submission, and that is the prayer of Christ in the garden; 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.'

I answer, That was an expression of the horror which was upon the human nature, which we mentioned before. But there were two things that Christ immediately closed upon, which gave evidence to this submission, that he did not draw back, nor rebel, nor hide himself, nor turn away his face from shame and spitting; one was this, 'Father, thy will be done,' saith he; and the other was this, That he refused that aid to deliver him which he might have had. 'Know ye not that I could pray the Father, and he would give me more than twelve legions of angels?' He then suffered under the Roman power, and their power was reduced to twelve legions. Saith he, I could have more than these; which argues his full submission unto the will of God.

(4.) We are to call over his patience under his sufferings, in his obedience, Isa. liii. 7. 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.' The highest ex-

pressions of an absolute, complete and perfect patience: though he was afflicted, and though he had all manner of provocations, 'though he was reviled, he reviled not again.' The apostle tells us, Heb. xii. 2. 'He endured the cross' (that is, he patiently endured it, as the word signifies) 'and despised the shame, that he might sit down at the right hand of God.'

You see then the end of this ordinance of the Lord's supper, is to stir us up to call over the obedience of Christ, both as to his love in it, as to his readiness for it, submission to the will of God in it, and patience under it.

3. Faith is to call over the work itself, and that was the death of Christ. I shall not now be able to manifest under what consideration in this ordinance faith calls over the death of Christ; but these are the heads I shall speak unto. It calls it over as a sacrifice, in that it was bloody; it calls it over as shameful, in that it was under the curse; it calls it over as bitter and dreadful, in that it was penal. It was a bloody, shameful, and penal death; as bloody, a sacrifice; as cursed, shameful; and as it was penal, it was bitter. In the work of faith's calling over these things there is a peculiar work of love also. Saith our Saviour, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' These are the words we would use unto a friend, when we give him a token or pledge, 'Remember me.' What is the meaning of it? Remember my love to you; my kindness for you; remember my person. There is a remembrance of love towards Christ to be acted in this ordinance, as well as a remembrance of faith; and as the next object of faith is, the benefits of Christ, and thereby to his person; so the next object of love is the person of Christ, and thereby to his benefits; I mean, as represented in this ordinance. Remember me, saith he, that is, with a heart full of love towards me. And there are three things wherein this remembrance of Christ by love in the celebration of this ordinance doth consist: delight in him, thankfulness unto him, and the keeping of his word. He that remembers Christ with love, hath these three affections in his heart.

(1.) He delights in him. The thoughts of Christ are sweet unto him, as of an absent friend; but only in spiritual things we have this great advantage, we can make an absent Christ present to us. This we cannot in natural things.

We can converse with friends only by imagination. But by faith we make Christ present with us, and delight in him.

(2.) There is thanksgiving towards him. That love which is fixed upon the person of Christ will break forth in great thankfulness, which is one peculiar act of this ordinance. The cup which we bless, or give thanks for.

(3.) It will greatly incline the heart to keep his word. If ye are my disciples, 'if ye love me, keep my commandments.' Every act of love fixed upon the person of Christ, gives a new spring of obedience to all the ordinances of Christ: and the truth is, there is no keeping up our hearts unto obedience to ordinances, but by renewed acts of obedience upon the person of Christ: this will make the soul cry, When shall I be in an actual observation of Christ's ordinance, who hath thus loved me, and washed me with his own blood, that hath done such great things for me?

This is the end of the death of Christ, which concerns our faith and love; the end of commemoration, or calling to remembrance.

There is an end of profession also; which is, 'to shew forth the Lord's death till he come.' But this must be spoken to at some other time. If we come to the practice of these things, we shall find them great things to call over; viz. the whole frame of the heart of Christ in his death, and his death itself, and our own concern therein, and the great example he hath set unto us. Some of them, I hope, may abide upon our hearts and spirits for our use.

DISCOURSE IV.*

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.—1 Cor. xi. 26.

One end, you see, of this great ordinance, is to shew the Lord's death, to declare it, to represent it, to shew it forth, hold it forth; the word is thus variously rendered. And in the especial ends of this ordinance it is, that we have special communion with our Lord Jesus Christ.

* Delivered December 24, 1669.

Now there are two ways whereby we shew forth the Lord's death; the one is, the way of representation to ourselves; and the other is, a way of profession unto others.

I. The way of representation to ourselves. The work of representing Christ aright to the soul, is a great work. God and men are agreed in it; and therefore God, when he represents Christ, his design is to represent him to the faith of men. Men that have not faith have a great desire to have Christ represented to their fancy and imagination; and therefore, when the way of representing Christ to the faith of men was lost among them, the greatest part of their religion was taken up in representing Christ to their fancy. They would make pictures and images of his cross, resurrection, ascension, and every thing he did.

There are three ways whereby God represents Christ to the faith of believers; the one is, by the word of the gospel itself, as written; the second is, by the ministry of the gospel, and preaching of the word; and the third in particular is, by this sacrament, wherein we represent the Lord's death to the faith of our own souls.

1. God doth it by the word itself. Hence are those descriptions that are given of Christ in Scripture, to represent him desirable to the souls of men. The great design of the book of Canticles consists, for the most part in this, in a mystical, allegorical description of the graces and excellencies of the person of Christ, to render him desirable to the souls of believers; as in the fifth chapter, from the ninth verse to the end, there is nothing but that one subject. And it was a great promise made to them of old, Isa. xxxiii. 17. 'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.' The promises of the Old Testament are much spent in representing the person of Christ beautiful, desirous, and lovely, to the faith of believers. And you will see in 2 Cor. iii. 18. what is the end of the gospel; 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The gospel is the glass here intended; and looking into the glass, there is an image appears in it, not our own, but the representation the gospel makes of Jesus Christ is the image that appears in the glass. The work and design of the gospel is to make a representation of Christ unto us; as Christ

makes a representation of the Father, and therefore he is called his image, the 'image of the invisible God.' Why so? Because all the glorious properties of the invisible God are represented to us in Christ, and we looking upon the image of Christ in this glass, that is the representation made of him in the gospel; it is the effectual means whereby the Spirit of God transforms us into his image.

This is the first way whereby God doth this great work of representing Christ unto the faith of men, which men having lost, have made it their whole religion to represent Christ unto their fancy.

2. The second way is, by the ministry of the word. The great work of the ministry of the word is to represent Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul tells us, Gal. iii. 1. 'O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?' He is 'depictus crucifixus,' crucified before their eyes. How was this? not before their bodily eyes; but the apostle had in his preaching made such a lively representation unto their faith of the death of Christ, that he was as one painted before them. One said well on this text, 'Of old the apostles did not preach Christ by painting, but they painted him by preaching;' they did in so lively a manner represent him.

Abraham's servant, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, that was sent to take a wife for his son Isaac, is by all granted to be, if not a type, yet a resemblance of the ministers of the gospel, that go forth to prepare a bride for Christ: and what does he do? truly he is a great example; when he came to the opportunity, though he had many things to divert him, yet he would not be diverted. There was set meat before him to eat, but he said, 'I will not eat, till I have told my errand.' Nothing should divert the ministers of the gospel, no not their necessary meat, when they have an opportunity of dealing with souls on behalf of Christ. What course does Abraham's servant take? He saith, 'I am Abraham's servant; and the Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he is become great, and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses.' What is all this to Isaac? He was to take a wife for Isaac, not for

Abraham. He goes on; 'And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old, and unto him hath he given all that he hath.' The way to procure this wife for Isaac was to let them know, that this great man, Abraham, had given all he had to Isaac. And it is the work of ministers of the gospel to let the people know, that God the Father hath given all things into the hands of his Son; they are to represent Christ as Abraham's servant does here his master Isaac, as one who inherited all the goods of Abraham; so Christ is the appointed heir of all things, of the kingdom of heaven, the whole household of God. They are to represent him thus to the souls of men, to make him desirable to them. This is the great work of ministers, who are ambassadors of God; they are sent from God to take a wife for Christ; or to make ready a bride for him from among the children of men.

3. The special way whereby we represent Christ unto our souls through faith, is in the administration of this ordinance, which I will speak to upon the great end of shewing forth the death of the Lord.

Now the former representations were general, this is particular; and I cannot at this time go over particulars. I bless the Lord my soul hath many times admired the wisdom and goodness of God in the institution of this one ordinance, that he took bread and wine for that end and purpose, merely arbitrary, of his own choice, and might have taken any thing else, what he had pleased; that he should fix on the cream of the creation, which is an endless storehouse, if pursued, of representing the mysteries of Christ. When the folly of men goes about to invent ceremonies that they would have significant; when they have found them out, they cannot well tell what they signify. But though I do acknowledge, that all the significancy of this ordinance depends upon the institution, yet there is great wisdom in the fitting of it; the thing was fitted and suited to be made use of to that end and purpose.

One end of the ordinance itself is to represent the death of Christ unto us; and it represents Christ with reference to these five things:

1. It represents him with reference to God's setting him forth. 2. In reference to his own passion. 3. In reference

to his exhibition in the promise. 4. To our participation of him by believing. And, 5. To his incorporation with us in union.

1. The great end of God in reference to Christ as to his death was, his setting of him forth; Rom. iii. 25. 'Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation.' And in the very setting forth of the elements in this ordinance there is a representation of God's setting forth his Son, of giving him out for this work, of giving him up unto it, to be a propitiation.

2. There is a plain representation of his passion, of his suffering and death, and the manner of it. This, with all the concerns of it, I treated of the last Lord's day, under the head of recognition, or calling over the death of Christ, 'Do this in remembrance of me;' and so I shall not again insist upon it.

3. There is a representation of Christ in it, as to the exhibition and tender of him in the promise. Many promises are expressed in invitations, 'Ho! every one that thirsts, come,' take, eat: there is a promise in it. And in the tender that is made even of the sacramental elements, there is the exhibition of Christ in the promise represented to the soul. I told you before, God hath carefully provided to represent Christ unto our faith, and not to our fancy; and therefore there is no outward similitude and figure. We can say concerning this ordinance, with all its representations, as God said concerning his appearing to Moses upon mount Horeb, 'Thou sawest no similitude.' God hath taken care there shall be no natural figure, that all representations made may stand upon institution. Now there is this tender with an invitation. The very elements of the ordinance are a great representation of the proposal of Christ to a believing soul. God holds out Christ as willing to be received, with an invitation. So we shew forth the Lord's death.

4. There is in this ordinance a representation of Christ as to our reception of him; for hereon depends the whole of the matter. God might make a feast of fat things, and propose it to men; but if they do not come to eat, they will not be nourished by it. If you make a tender of payment to a man, if he doth not receive it, the thing remains at a distance, as before. Christ being tendered to a soul, if that

soul doth not receive him, he hath no benefit by it. All these steps you may go. There may be God's exhibition of Christ, and setting of him forth; there may be his own oblation and suffering, laying the foundation of all that is to come; there may be an exhibition of him in the promise, tender, and invitation, and yet, if not received, we have no profit by all these things. What a great representation of this receiving is there in the administration of this ordinance, when every one takes the representation of it to himself, or doth receive it!

5. It gives us a representation of our incorporation in Christ; the allusion whereof, from the nature of the elements' incorporation with us, and being the strength of our lives, might easily be pursued. This is the first way of shewing forth the Lord's death.

II. I shall now speak a few words to the profession of it among ourselves, and to others.

Let me take one or two observations to make way for it.

1. That visible profession is a matter of more importance than most men make of it. As the apostle saith, Rom. x. 10. 'With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Look, how indispensably necessary believing is unto righteousness, to justification; no less indispensably necessary is confession or profession unto salvation. There is no man that doth believe with his heart unto righteousness, but he will with his mouth (which is there taken by a synecdoche for the whole of our profession), make confession unto salvation. This is that which brings glory to God. The apostle tells us, 2 Cor. ix. 13. that men, 'by the experiment of this ministration, glorify God for your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.' Glory doth not arise out of obedience, so much as by your profession of it; by the giving them experiment, both of your faith and the reality of it, and that by this fruit of your profession.

Now profession consists in these two things: (1.) In an abstinence from all things with reference to God and his worship, which Christ has not appointed. (2.) In the observation and performance of all things that Christ has appointed.

Men are apt to think, that abstinence from the pollutions

that are in the world through lust, the keeping themselves from the sins and defilements of the world, and inclining to that party that is not of the world, is profession. These things are good; but our profession consists in the observation of Christ's commands, what he requires of us. 'Go teach them.' What to do? 'Whatsoever I have commanded them; and lo, I am with you always to the end of the world.' There is an expression, John xiv. 24. wherein our Saviour puts a trial of our love to him upon the keeping of his sayings; 'He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.' To keep the sayings of Christ, is to observe the commands of Christ, which is the perfect trial of our love to him.

2. There is in this ordinance a special profession of Christ. There is a profession of him against the shame of the world; a profession of him against the curse of the law; and a profession of him against the power of the devil. All our profession doth much centre, or is mightily acted, in this ordinance.

(1.) The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was in the world a shameful death, and that with which Christians were constantly reproached, and which hardly went down with the world. It is a known story, that when the Jesuits preached the gospel, as they call it, in China, they never let them know of the death of Christ, till the congregation 'De Propaganda Fide' commanded it; for the world is mightily scandalized at the shameful death of the cross.

Now in this ordinance we profess the death of Christ, wherein he was crucified, as a malefactor, against all the contempt of the world. It was a great part of the concession of the Christians of old, and there is something in it still: here we come solemnly before God, and all the world, and profess that we expect all our life and salvation from the death of this crucified Saviour.

(2.) In our profession 'we shew forth the death of the Lord' in the celebration of this ordinance, in opposition 'to the curse of the law;' that whereas the curse of the law doth lay claim to us because we are sinners, here we profess that God hath transferred the curse of the law to another who underwent it. So they did with the sacrifices of old, when they had confessed all the sins and iniquities of the

people over the head of the goat, then they sent him away into destruction. So it is in this ordinance; here we confess all our sins and iniquities over the head of this great sacrifice, and profess to the law and all its accusations, that there our sins are charged. 'Who shall lay any thing to our charge? and who shall condemn? It is Christ that died.' We confront the claim of the law, shake off its authority as to its curse, and profess to it that its charge is satisfied.

(3.) We make a profession against the power of Satan. For the great trial of the power and interest of the devil in, unto, and over the souls of men, was in the cross of Jesus Christ. He put his kingdom to a trial, staked his all upon it, and mustered up all the strength he had got, all the aids that the guilt of sin and the rage of the world could furnish him with. 'Now,' saith Christ, 'is your hour and power of darkness.' He comes to try what he can do; and what was the issue of the death of Christ? Why, saith the apostle, 'he spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross.' So that in our celebration of the death of Christ, we do profess against Satan, that his power is broken, that he is conquered, tied to the chariot wheels of Christ, who has disarmed him.

This is the profession we make when we shew forth the Lord's death, against the shame of the world, against the curse of the law, and the power of hell. This is the second general end of this ordinance, and another means it is whereby we have especial communion with Christ in it; which was the thing I aimed at from the words I had chosen. And now I have gone through all I intend upon this subject.

A word or two of use, and I have done.

1. It is a very great honour and privilege to be called of God unto this great work of shewing forth the death of Christ. I think it is as great and glorious a work as any of the children of men can be engaged in, in this world. I have shewed you formerly, how all the acts of the glorious properties of God's nature centre themselves in this infinite, wise, holy product of them, the death of Christ: and that God should call us to represent and shew forth this death. The Lord forgive us where we have not longed to perform this work as we ought; for we have suffered carnal fears

and affections, and any thing else, to keep us off from employing ourselves in this great and glorious work. The grace and mercy of God in this matter is ever to be acknowledged, in that he has called us to this great and glorious work.

2. Then surely it is our duty to answer the mind of God in this work; and not to attend to it in a cold, careless, and transient manner. But methinks we might rejoice in our hearts when we have thoughts of it, and say within ourselves, 'Come, we will go and shew forth the Lord's death.' The world, the law, and Satan, are conquered by it: blessed be God that has given us an opportunity to profess this. O that our hearts may long after the season for it, and say, When shall the time come?

3. We may do well to remember what was spoken before concerning the great duty of representing God to our souls, that we may know how to attend to it. I would speak unto the meanest of the flock, to guide our hearts and thoughts which are too ready to wander, and are so unprofitable for want of spiritual fixation. We would fain trust to our affections rather than to our faith, and would rather have them moved, than faith graciously to act itself. And when we fail therein, we are apt to think we fail in our end of the ordinance, because our affections were not moved. Set faith genuinely at work, and we have the end of the ordinance. Let it represent Christ to our souls, as exhibited of God, and given out unto us, as suffering, as tendered to us, and as received and incorporated with us.

DISCOURSE V.*

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.—1 Cor. xi. 28.

I have been treating of that special communion which believers have with Christ, in the administration of the ordinance of the supper of the Lord; and thought I should have treated no more of that subject; having gone through all the particulars of it, which were practical, such as might be reduced to present practice. But I remember I said nothing concerning preparation for it, which yet is a needful duty: and therefore I shall a little speak to that also; not what may doctrinally be delivered upon it, but those things, or some of them at least, in which every soul will find a practical concern that intends to be a partaker of that ordinance to benefit and advantage: and I have taken these words of the apostle for my groundwork. 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.'

There were many disorders fallen in this church at Corinth; and that various ways, in schisms and divisions, in neglect of discipline, in false opinions, and particularly in a great abuse of the administration of this great ordinance of the supper of the Lord. And though I do not, I dare not, I ought not to bless God for their sin; yet I bless God for his providence. Had it not been for their disorders, we had all of us been much in darkness as to all church way. The correction of their disorders contain the principal rule for church communion, and the administration of this sacrament that we have in the whole Scripture; which might have been hid from us, but that God suffered them to fall into them on purpose, that through their fall in them, and by them, he might instruct his church in all ages to the end of the world.

The apostle is here rectifying abuses about the administration of the Lord's supper, which were many; and he applies particular directions to all their particular miscar-

* Delivered Jan. 7, 1769-70.

tiages, not now to be insisted on; and he gathers up all directions into this one general rule that I have here read, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat,' &c. Now this self-examination extends itself unto the whole due preparation of the souls of men for the actual participation of this ordinance. And I shall endeavour, by plain instances out of the Scripture (which is my way in these familiar exercises), to manifest that there is a preparation necessary for the celebration, or observance of all solemn ordinances. And I shall shew you what that preparation is, and wherein it doth consist. And then I shall deduce from thence what is that particular preparation which is incumbent upon us, in reference unto this special ordinance, that is superadded unto the general preparation that is required unto all ordinances.

I. I shall manifest, that there is a preparation necessary for the celebration of solemn worship. We have an early instance of it in Gen. xxxv. 1—5. In the first verse, 'God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and make there an altar unto God.' It was a solemn ordinance Jacob was called unto, to build an altar unto God, and to offer sacrifice. What course did he take? you may see, ver. 2, 3. 'And Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God.' I will not engage, saith he, in this great duty without a preparation for it; and, saith he, the preparation shall be suitable. Peculiar, special preparation (to observe that by the way) for any ordinance, consists in the removal of that from us which stands in peculiar opposition to that ordinance, whatever it be. 'I am to build an altar unto God; put away the strange gods;' and accordingly he did so.

When God came to treat with the people in that great ordinance of giving the law, which was the foundation of all following ordinances; Exod. xix. 10, 11. 'The Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day, and to-morrow; and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day. For the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai.' I will not insist on these typical preparations, but only say, it sufficiently proves the

general thesis, that there ought to be such a preparation for any meeting with God in any of his ordinances. Saith he, 'sanctify yourselves,' &c. 'and on the third day I will come.' God is a great God, with whom we have to do. It is not good to have carnal boldness in our accesses and approaches to him; and therefore, he teaches us, that there is a preparation due. And what weight God lays upon this, you may see, 2 Chron. xxx. 18—20. A multitude of people came to the sacrifice of the passover; but, saith he, 'they had not cleansed themselves,' there was not due preparation; but 'Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one, that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.' Perhaps the people might have thought it enough, that they had their personal qualification, that they were believers, that they had prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God of their fathers; a thing most persons trust unto in this matter. No, saith the king, in praying for them; they did prepare their hearts for the Lord God of their fathers, but 'they were not prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary.' There is an instituted preparation, as well as a personal disposition, which if not observed, God will smite them: God had smote the people; given them some token of his displeasure: they come with great willingness and desire to be partakers of this holy ordinance; yet, because they were not prepared according to the purification of the sanctuary, God smites them.

It was an ordinance of God that Paul had to perform, and we would have thought it a thing that he might easily have done, without any great forethought, but it had that weight upon his spirit, Rom. xv. 30, 31. that with all earnestness he begs the prayers of others, that he might be carried through the performance of it; 'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.' He had a service to do at Jerusalem. He was gathering the contributions of the saints (an ordinance of God) to carry it up to the poor of Jerusalem; and

it was upon his heart, that this his service might find acceptance with them; therefore he begs with all his soul, 'I beseech you, brethren,' &c. So great weight did he lay upon the performance of an ordinance, that one would think might be easily passed over, without any great regard.

The caution we have, Eccles. v. 1. is to the same purpose: 'Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.' I shall not stand upon the particular exposition of any of these expressions, but it is a plain caution of diligent consideration of ourselves in all things we have to do in the house of God. A bold venturing upon an ordinance is but the sacrifice of fools: 'Keep thy foot,' look to thy affections; 'be more ready to hear,' saith he; that is, to attend unto the command, what God requires from thee, and the way and manner of it, than merely to run upon a sacrifice, or the performance of the duty itself.

I will name one place more: Psal. xxvi. 6. 'I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.'

I have a little confirmed this general proposition, that all take for granted; and I fear we content ourselves for the most part with the state and condition of those mentioned, who prepared their hearts to meet the Lord God of their fathers, not considering how they may be prepared 'according to the preparation of the sanctuary.' You will ask, What is that preparation?

This question brings me to the

II. Second general head I propounded to speak unto: I answer, That the general preparation that respects all ordinances hath reference unto God; to ourselves; to the ordinance itself.

1. It hath respect unto God. This is the first thing to be considered; for this he lays down as the great law of his ordinances. 'I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh unto me.' Lev. x. 3. God is, in the first place, to be considered in all our drawings nigh unto him; as that is the general name of all ordinances, a drawing nigh, an access unto God. 'I will be sanctified,' &c. Now God is to be considered three ways, that he may be sanctified in any ordinance: as the author; as the object; as the end of it.

I shall speak only to those things that lie practically before us, and are indispensably required of us in waiting upon God, in any and every ordinance.

(1.) Our preparation, in reference unto God, consists in due consideration of God, as the author of any ordinance wherein we draw nigh unto him. For this is the foundation of all ordinances. Rom. xiv. 11. 'As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to me.' A practical sense of the authority of God in every ordinance, is that which is required in the very first place for our preparation. I know full well how that the mind of man is to be influenced by general convictions and particular customs. Particular usages built upon general convictions carry most people through their duties: but that is no preparation of heart. There is to be an immediate sense of the authority and command of God.

(2.) We are to consider God in Christ, as the immediate object of that worship which in every ordinance we do perform. You will ask, What special apprehensions concerning God are particularly necessary to this duty of preparation for communion with God in an ordinance? I answer, Two are particularly necessary, that should be practically upon our thoughts in every ordinance; the presence of God, and the holiness of God. As God is the object of our worship, these two properties of God are principally to be considered in all our preparations.

[1] The presence of God. When Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 27. derided the worshippers of Baal, the chief part of his derision was, 'he is in a journey;' you have a God that is absent, saith Elijah: and the end of all idolatry in the world, is to feign the presence of an absent Deity. All images and idols are set up for no other end, but to feign the presence of what really is absent. Our God is present, and in all his ordinances. I beg of God, I may have a double sense of his presence, 1st. A special sense of his omnipresence. God requires, that we should put in all ordinances a specialty of faith upon his general attributes. Gen. xxviii. 16. Jacob, when God appeared unto him, though but in a dream, awaked out of sleep, and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.' I would say so concerning every ordinance whereunto I go; the Lord is in

that place. I speak now only concerning his real presence: for if idolaters adorn all their places of worship with pictures, images and idols, that they might feign the presence of a God; I ought to act faith particularly upon the real presence of the immense and omnipresent God. He bids us consider it in the business of his worship; Jer. xxiii. 23. 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?' Consider my glorious presence is every where. As we ought always, wherever we are, and whatever we do, to carry a sense with us of the presence of God, to say, God is here, that we may not be surprised in our journies, or in any thing that may befall us, suppose a broken leg or a broken arm; then we may say, 'God is in this place, and I knew it not.' So particularly where we have to do in his ordinances, let there be an antecedent remembrance that God is in that place.

2dly. We are to remember the gracious presence of God. There was a twofold presence of God of old, the one temporary, by an extraordinary appearance; the other standing, by a continued institution. Wherever God made an extraordinary appearance, there he required of his people to look upon him to have a special presence: it was but temporary, when God appeared to Moses in the bush: 'Draw not nigh,' saith God: 'put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the ground whereon thou standest is holy;' because of God's special appearance: but the next day, as far as I know, sheep fed upon that holy ground. It was no longer holy than God's appearance made it so. So he said to Joshua, when he was by Jericho, 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy,' Josh. v. 15. It was a temporary appearance of God; there was his special presence. It was so on the institution of the tabernacle and temple; God instituted them, and gave his special presence to them by virtue of his institution. Our Saviour tells us, all this is departed under the gospel, John iv. 21. 'You shall no longer worship God,' saith he, 'neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem; but he that worshippeth God must worship him in spirit and in truth.' Is there no special presence of God remains then? Yea, there is a special presence of God in all his ordinances and institutions. 'Wherever I record my name' (as the name of God is upon all his institutions), 'there I will come unto you, and I will bless you,' saith God in

Exod. xx. 24. Let us exercise our thoughts then to this especial promised presence of God in every ordinance and institution; it belongs greatly to our preparation for an ordinance. It was no hard thing for them, you may think, of old, where God had put his presence in a place, to go thither, and expect the presence of God; things that are absent are hard; things that are present are not so. But it is no harder matter for us to go and expect God's presence in his instituted ordinances now, than for them to go to the temple; considering God, as the object of our worship, is no less present with us.

[2.] The second property which is principally to be considered in God, in his ordinances, as he is the object of them, is his holiness. This is the general rule that God gives in all ordinances, 'Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.' And Joshua, chap. xxiv. 19. tells the people what they were principally to consider in serving the Lord. 'We will serve the Lord,' say the people: saith Joshua, 'You cannot serve him, for the Lord is a holy God;' intimating, that they were to have due apprehensions of his holiness; and without it, there is no approaching unto him in his service. The apostle gives a great and plain rule to this purpose, Heb. xii. 28, 29. 'Let us have grace,' saith he, 'whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' What doth he propose now as the principal reason why he requires this preparation? 'For,' saith he, 'our God is a consuming fire.' What property of God is expressed by this word 'consuming fire?' It is the holiness of God, the purity of God's nature, that can bear no corrupt, nor defiled thing. It is set forth by that metaphorical expression, 'a consuming fire.' As fire is the most pure and unmixed element, and so powerful of itself, as that it will consume and destroy every thing that is not perfectly of its own nature; so is God, saith he, 'a consuming fire;' and in all your serving of him, and approaches unto him, labour to obtain a frame of spirit that becomes them who have to do with that God who is so pure and holy.

I do but choose out these things, which, in the way of ordinances, I would say, are, I may say, desire, should be most upon my heart and spirit: I might easily enlarge it to other considerations. But let these two considerations dwell upon

our minds, as our preparation for our access unto God; thoughts of his glorious and gracious presence, and of his holiness. Psal. xciii. 5. 'Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.' That is the second thing with respect to God, as the object of all the ordinances of our worship.

(3.) Our preparation respects God as he is the end of ordinances; and that to these three purposes, if I could insist upon them. He is the end of them, as we aim in them to 'give glory unto him:' he is the end of them, as we aim in them 'to be accepted with him:' he is the end of them, as we aim in them 'to be blessed by him.' These are the three things that are our end in all ordinances that we celebrate.

[1.] The first is, the general end of all that we do in this world; we are to do all to the glory of God: it is the immediate end of all our worship. 'If I am a father,' saith he, 'where is my honour?' Where is my glory? Mal. i. 6. Do you come to worship me? you are to give me honour as to a father, glory as to a master, as to a lord. We come to own him as our Father, acknowledge our dependence upon him as a Father, our submission to him as our Lord and Master, and thus give glory to him. He hath never taken one step to the preparing of his heart according to the preparation of the sanctuary, in the celebration of ordinances, who hath not designed in them to give glory unto God.

[2.] Another end is, to be accepted with him; according to that great promise, which you have, Ezek. xliii. 27. 'You shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and I will accept you, saith the Lord God.' It is a promise of gospel-times; for it is in the description of the new, glorious temple. We come to God to have our persons and offerings accepted by Jesus Christ. And,

[3.] To 'be blessed according to his promise.' That 'God will bless us out of Zion.' What the particular blessings are we look for in particular ordinances, in due time, God assisting, I shall acquaint you with, when we come to the special and particular preparation for that ordinance we aim at. But this is necessary to all, and so to that.

2. This preparation respects ourselves. There are three things which I desire my heart may be prepared by in reference to the ordinances of God.

(1.) The first is indispensably necessary, laid down in that

great rule, Psal. lxvi. 18. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;' that I bring a heart to ordinances without regard to any particular iniquity. We have the dreadful instance of Judas, who came to that great ordinance of the passover, with regard to iniquity in his heart, which particular iniquity was covetousness, and went away with the devil in his whole mind and soul.

Ezek. xiv. 4. is another place to this purpose: 'Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.' There is no more effectual course in the world to make poor souls incorrigible, than to come to ordinances, and to be able to digest under them a regard to iniquity in our hearts. If we have idols, God will answer us according to our idols. What is the answering of men according to their idols? Why, plainly, it is this, allotting them peace while they have their idols; you shall have peace with regard to iniquity; you come for peace, take peace; which is the saddest condition any soul can be left under: you shall have peace and your idols together. Whenever we prepare ourselves, if this part of our preparation be wanting, if we do not all of us cast out the idols of our hearts, and cease regarding of iniquity, all is lost.

(2.) The second head of preparation on our own part, is self-abasement, out of a deep sense of the infinite distance that is between God and us, whom we go to meet. I have taken upon myself to speak to the great Possessor of heaven and earth, who am but dust and ashes. Nothing brings God and man so near together, as a due sense of our infinite distance. Isa. lvii. 15. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.'

(3.) A heart filled with love to ordinances, is a great preparation for an ordinance. How doth David, in the eighty-fourth Psalm, pant and long, and breathe after the ordinances of God! To love prayer, to love the word, is a great preparation for both. To love the presence of Christ

in the supper, is a great preparation for it. To keep an habitual frame of love in the heart for ordinances.

I would not load your memories with particulars. I mention plain practical things unto those, for whose spiritual welfare I am more particularly concerned; that we may retain them for our use, and know them for ourselves; and they are such as I know more or less (though perhaps not so distinctly) all our hearts work after, and in these things our souls do live.

3. Our preparation in reference unto any ordinance itself; which consists in two things: (1.) A satisfactory persuasion of the institution of the ordinance itself; that it is that which God hath appointed. If God should meet us, and say, 'Who hath required these things at your hands?' And Christ should come and tell us, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up:' or, 'In vain do you worship me; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' How would such words fill the hearts of poor creatures with confusion, if engaged in such ways that God hath not required? We must be careful then that for the substance of the duty, it be appointed of God.

(2.) That it be performed in a due manner. One failure herein, what a disturbance did it bring upon poor David? It is observed by many, that search the whole course of David's life, that which he was most eminent in, which God did so bless him for, and own him in, was his love to the ordinances of God. And I cannot but think with what a full heart David went to bring home the ark; with what longings after God; with what rejoicings in him; with what promises to himself; what glorious things there would be after he had the ark of God to be with him: and yet, when he went to do this, you know what a breach God made upon him, dashed all his hopes, and all the good frame in him: God made a breach upon Uzzah; and it is said, the thing God did displeased David, it quite unframed him, and threw a damp on his joy and delight for the present. But he afterward gathers it up, 1 Chron. xv. 12, 13. 'He spake to the Levites, sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethen, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it; for because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we

sought him not after the due order.' He sought him, saith he, 'but not after the due order.' And what that due order was, he shews in the next verses, where he declares, that the Levites carried the ark upon their own shoulders, with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord; whereas before, they carried it in a cart, which was not for that service. It is a great thing to have the administration of an ordinance in the due order. God lays great weight upon it, and we ought to take care that the order be observed.

This is what we have to offer to you concerning the two general propositions: that there is a preparation required of us for the observance of all solemn ordinances; and that this preparation consists in a due regard to God, to ourselves, and to the ordinance, whatever it be. To God, as the author, as the object, and as the end of ordinances; to ourselves, to remove that which would hinder, not to regard iniquity; to be self-abased in our hearts with respect to the infinite distance that there is between God and us, and with a love unto ordinances: with respect unto the ordinance itself, that it be of God's appointment for the matter and manner. These things may help us to a due consideration, whether we have failed in any of them, or not.

I have mentioned nothing but what is plain and evident from the Scripture, and what is practicable; nothing but what is really required of us; such things as we ought not to esteem a burden, but an advantage: and whereinsoever we have been wanting we should do well to labour to have our hearts affected with it; for it hath been one cause why so many of us have laboured in the fire under ordinances, and have had no profit nor benefit by them. As I said before, conviction is the foundation, custom is the building of most in their observation of ordinances. Some grow weary of them; some wear them on their necks as a burden; some seek relief from them, and do not find it; and is it any wonder, if this great duty be wanting? having neither considered God, nor ourselves, in what we go about? And above all things take heed of that deceit I mentioned, which is certainly very apt to impose itself upon us; that where there is a disposition in the person there needs no preparation for the duty. There was a preparation in those whom God

broke out upon, because they were not prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary; that is, in that way and manner of preparation; they had not gone through those cleansings which were instituted under the law.

DISCOURSE VI.*

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.—1 Cor. xi. 28.

I have been treating in sundry of these familiar exercises about communion with Jesus Christ in that great ordinance of the Lord's supper, intending principally, if not solely, the instruction of those who have, it may be, been least exercised in such duties. I have spoke something of preparation for it, and on the last opportunity of this kind I did insist upon these two things, that there is a preparation required unto the due observance of every solemn ordinance; and I did manifest, what in general was required to that preparation. I have nothing to do at present, but to consider the application of those general rules to the special ordinance of the supper of the Lord. For the special preparation for an ordinance consists in the special respect which we have to that ordinance in our general preparation: and I shall speak to it plainly, so as that the weakest, who are concerned, may see their interest in it, and have some guidance to their practice.

And there are two things which may be considered to this purpose, The time wherein this duty is to be performed; and, The duty of preparation itself.

I. The time of the performance of the duty; for that indeed regards as well what hath been said concerning preparation in general, as what shall now be farther added concerning preparation in particular, with respect to this ordinance.

Time hath a double respect unto the worship of God, as a part of it; so it is when it is separated by the appointment

* Delivered January 21, 1669-70.

of God himself; and as a necessary adjunct of those actions whereby the worship of God is performed; for there is nothing can be done, but it must be done in time, the inseparable adjunct of all actions.

And therefore having proved that a preparation is necessary, I shall prove that there is a time necessary, for there can be no duty performed, but it must be performed, as I said, in some time.

For the right stating of that therefore, I shall give you these rules:

1. That there is a time antecedent to the celebration of this ordinance to be set apart for preparation unto it. The very nature of the duty, which we call preparation, doth inevitably include this, that the time for it must be antecedent to the great duty of observing the ordinance itself. So Matt. xxvii. 62. the evening before the passover is called, 'The preparation of the passover,' time set apart for the preparation of it.

2. The second rule is this, That there is no particular set time, neither as to the day, or season of the day, as to the beginning or ending of it, that is determined for this duty, in the Scripture: but the duty itself being commanded, the time is left unto our own prudence, to be regulated according to what duty doth require; so that you are not to expect that I should precisely determine this or that time, this or that day, this or that hour, so long or so short; for God hath left these things to our liberty, to be regulated by our own duty and necessity.

3. There are three things that will greatly guide a man in the determination of the time, which is thus left unto his own judgment according to the apprehension of his duty.

(1.) That he choose a time wherein the preparation of it may probably influence his mind and spirit in and unto the ordinance itself. Persons may choose a time for preparation when there may be such an interposition of worldly thoughts and business, between the preparation and the ordinance, that their minds may be no way influenced by it in the performance and observation of the duty. The time ought to be so fixed, that the duty may leave a savour upon the soul unto the time of the celebration of the ordinance

itself, whether it be the preceding day, or whether it be the same day. The work is lost unless a man endeavours to keep up a sense of those impressions which he received in that work.

(2.) Providential occurrences and intimations are great rules for the choosing of time and season for duties. Paul comes to Athens, Acts xvii. and in all probability he intended not to preach immediately upon his journey. He intended to take some time for his refreshment. But observing the wickedness of the place, ver. 16. 'that they were wholly given to idolatry,' and observing their altar to 'the unknown God;' ver. 32. He laid hold of that hint of providence, that intimation given him by God's providence from these things, and immediately fell upon his work, which God blessed with great success. There be a thousand ways, if I may so say, wherein an observing Christian may find God hinting and intimating duties unto him. The sins of other men, their graces, mercies, dangers, may be all unto us intimations of a season for duty. Were none of us ever sent to God by the outrageous wickedness of others? By the very observation of it? And it is a sign of a good spirit to turn providential intimations into duties. The psalmist speaks to that purpose, Psal. xxxii. 8, 9. 'I will guide thee by mine eye,' saith he. The next words are, 'Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which hath no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.' God loves a pliable spirit, that upon every look of his eye will be guided to a duty. But those who are like horses and mules, that must be held with a strong rein, that will not be turned, till God puts great strength to it, are possessed with such a frame of spirit which God approves not. You are left at liberty to choose a time, but observe any intimation of providence that may direct to that time.

(3.) Be sure to improve surprisals with gracious dispositions, I mean, in the approach of solemn ordinances. Sometimes the soul is surprised with a gracious disposition, as in Canticles vi. 12. 'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.' I knew it not, saith the church, I was not aware of it, but I found my soul in a special willing manner drawn forth to communion with Christ. Is God pleased at any time to give us such gracious

surprisals with a holy disposition to be dealing with him, it will be the best season; let it not be omitted.

These things will a little direct us in the determination of the time for preparation, which is left unto our own liberty.

4. Take care, that the time designed and allotted, does neither too much intrench upon the occasions of the outward man, nor upon the weakness of the inward man. If it doth, they will be too hard for us. I confess, in this general observation which professors are fallen into, and that custom which is in the observation of duties, there is little need to give this rule. But we are not to accommodate our rule unto our corruptions, but unto our duties; and so there is a double rule in Scripture fortifies this rule; the one is that great rule of our Saviour, 'That God will have mercy and not sacrifice.' Where these duties of observing sacrifices do sensibly intrench upon duties of mercy, God doth not require it; which hath a great regard even unto our outward occasions. And the other rule is this, That bodily exercise profits little. When we assign so long a time as wearies out our spirits, and observe the time because of the time, it is bodily exercise; when the vigour of our spirits is gone, which is a sacrifice God delights not in. As Jacob told Esau, If the cattle were driven beyond their pace they would die; so we find by experience, that though with strong resolutions we may engage unto duties in such a manner as may intrench upon these outward occasions, or those weaknesses; they will return, and be too hard for us, and instead of getting ground, they will drive us off of ours; so that there is prudence to be required therein.

5. Let not the time allotted be so short as to be unmeet for the going through with the duty effectually. Men may be ready to turn their private prayers into a few ejaculations, and going in or out of a room may serve them for preparation for the most solemn ordinance. This hath lost us the power, the glory, the beauty of our profession. Never was profession held up to more glory and beauty, than when persons were most exact in their preparation for the duties of their profession; nothing will serve their turn, but their souls having real and suitable converse with God, as unto the duty that lies before them.

6. The time of preparation is to be exercised and made

more solemn upon extraordinary occasions. The intervention of extraordinary occasions must add a solemnity to the time of preparation, if we intend to walk with God in a due manner. These extraordinary occasions may be referred to three heads: particular sins; particular mercies; particular duties.

(1.) Is there an interveniency upon the conscience of any special sin, that either the soul hath been really overtaken with, or that God is pleased to set home afresh upon the Spirit; there is then an addition to be made unto the time of our preparation, to bring things to that issue between God and our souls, that we may attend upon the ordinance, to hearken what God the Lord will now speak, and then he will speak peace. This is the first principal extraordinary interveniency that must make an addition to the time of preparation for this ordinance.

(2.) The interveniences of mercies. The ordinance hath the nature of a thank-offering, and is the great medium, or means of our returning praise unto God, that we can make use of in this world. And then are we truly thankful for a temporal mercy, when it engages our hearts to thank God for Christ, by whom all mercies are blessed to us. Hath God cast in any special mercy, add unto the special preparation, that the heart may be fit to bless God for him, who is the fountain and cause of all mercies.

(3.) Special duties require the like. For it being the solemn time of our renewing covenant with God, we stand in need of a renewal of strength from God if we intend to perform special duties; and in our renewing covenant with God, we receive that especial strength for these special duties.

These rules I have offered you concerning the time of this great duty of preparation, which I am speaking unto; and I shall add one more, without which you will easily grant that all the rest will fall to the ground, and with which God will teach you all the rest; and that is, Be sure you set apart some time. I am greatly afraid of customariness in this matter. Persons complain that in waiting upon God in that ordinance, they do not receive that entertainment at the hand of God, that refreshment which they looked for. They have more reason to wonder, that they were not cast out, as those who came without 'a wedding garment.' That

is not only required of us, that we come with our wedding garment, which every believer hath, but that we come decked with this garment. A man may have a garment that may fit very ill, very unhandsomely, about him. The bride decks herself with her garments for the bridegroom. We are to do so for the meeting with Christ in this ordinance, to stir up all the graces God hath bestowed upon us, that we may be decked for Christ. There lies the unprofitableness under that ordinance, that though God has given us the wedding garment that we are not to cast out, yet we take not care to deck ourselves, that God and Christ may give us refreshing entertainment when we come into his presence. Our failing herein evidently and apparently witnesses to the faces of most professors, that this is the ground of their unprofitableness under that ordinance. So much for the time.

II. I shall now speak a little to the duty itself of preparation for that ordinance; remembering what I spake before of preparation in general unto all solemn ordinances, which must still be supposed.

Now the duty may be reduced to these four heads: meditation; examination; supplication; expectation. And if I mistake not, they are all given us in one verse; and though not directly applied to this ordinance, yet to this among other ways of our intimate communion with Christ; Zech. xii. 10. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.' There is, 1. Meditation: 'They shall look upon him;' this is no otherwise to be performed but by the meditation of faith. Our looking upon Christ is by believing meditation. Looking argues the fixing of the sight; and meditation is the fixing of faith in its actings. Looking is a fixing of the eye; faith is the eye of the soul; and to look is to fix faith in meditation. And there is, 2. Examination which produceth the mourning here mentioned. For though it is said, 'They shall mourn for him;' it was not to mourn for his sufferings; for so he said, 'Weep not for me;' but to mourn upon the account of those things wherein they were concerned in his sufferings.

It brings to repentance, which is the principal design of this examination. 3. There is supplication; for there shall be poured out a spirit of grace and supplication. And, 4. There is expectation; which is included also in that of looking unto Christ.

1. The first part of this duty of preparation consists in meditation: and meditation is a duty, that by reason of the vanity of our own minds, and the variety of objects which they are apt to fix upon, even believers themselves do find as great a difficulty therein as any.

I shall only mention those special objects which our thoughts are to be fixed upon in this preparatory duty; and you may reduce them to the following heads:

1. The principal object of meditation in our preparation for this ordinance, 'is the horrible guilt and provocation that is in sin.' There is a representation of the guilt of sin made in the cross of Christ. There was a great representation of it in the punishment of angels; a great representation of it is made in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and both these are proposed unto us in a special manner, 2 Pet. ii. 4—6. to set forth the heinous nature of the guilt of sin: but they come very short, nay, give me leave to say, that hell itself comes short of representing the guilt of sin in comparison of the cross of Christ. And the Holy Ghost would have us mind it, where he saith, 'He was made sin for us;' 2 Cor. v. 21. See what comes of sin, saith he, what demerit, what provocation there is in it; to see the Son of God praying, crying, trembling, bleeding, dying, God hiding his face from him; the earth trembling under him; darkness round about him; how can the soul but cry out, O Lord, is this the effect of sin! Is all this in sin! Here then take a view of sin. Others look on it in its pleasures and the advantages of it; and cry, is it not a little one? as Lot of Zoar. But look on it in the cross of Christ, and there it appears in another hue. All this is from my sin, saith the contrite soul.

2. The purity, the holiness, and the severity of God, that would not pass by sin, when it was charged upon his Son. 'He set him forth,' Rom. iii. 25. 'to declare his righteousness.' As there was a representation of the guilt of

sin, so there was an everlasting representation of the holiness and righteousness of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. He spared him not. And may the soul say, Is God thus holy in his nature, thus severe in the execution of his wrath, so to punish, and so to revenge sin, when his Son undertook to answer for it? How dreadful is this God! How glorious! What a consuming fire! It is that which will make sinners in Zion cry, 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Consider the holiness and the severity of God in the cross of Christ, and it will make the soul look about him, how to appear in the presence of that God.

3. Would you have another object of your meditation in this matter; let it be the infinite wisdom and the infinite love of God that found out this way of glorifying his holiness and justice, and dealing with sin according to its demerit. 'God so loved the world,' John iii. 16. 'as to send his only begotten Son.' 'And herein is love,' love indeed! 1 John iv. 10. 'that God sent his Son to die for us.' And the apostle, Eph. iii. 10. lays it upon 'the manifold wisdom of God.' Bring forth your faith; be your faith never so weak, never so little a reality, do but realize it, and do not let common thoughts and notions take up and possess your spirits. Here is a glorious object for it to work upon, to consider the infinite wisdom and love that found out this way. It was out of love unsearchable. And now what may not my poor sinful soul expect from this love? What difficulties can I be entangled in, but this wisdom can disentangle me? And what distempers can I be under, but this love may heal and recover? There is hope then, saith the soul, in preparation for these things.

4. Let the infinite love of Jesus Christ himself be also at such a season had in remembrance. Gal. ii. 20. 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Rev. i. 5. 'Who loved us, and washed us in his own blood.' Phil. ii. 6—8. 'Who when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' 2 Cor. viii. 9. 'This was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye

through his poverty might be rich.' The all-conquering and all-endearing love of Christ, is a blessed preparative meditation for this great ordinance.

5. There is the end, what all this came to: this guilt of sin, this holiness of God, this wisdom of grace, this love of Christ; what did all this come to? Why the apostle tells us, Col. i. 20. 'He hath made peace through the blood of his cross.' The end of it all was to make peace between God and us; and this undertaking issued in his blood, that was able to do it, and nothing else; yea, that hath done it. It is a very hard thing for a soul to believe that there is peace made with God for him and for his sin; but really trace it through these steps, and it will give a great deal of strength to faith. Derive it from the lowest, the deepest pit of the guilt of sin; carry it into the presence of the severity of God, and so bring it to the love of Christ, and the issue which the Scriptures testify of all these things was, to make peace and reconciliation.

Some may say that they would willingly meditate upon these things, but they cannot remember them, they cannot retain them, and it would be long work to go through and think of them all; and such as they have not strength and season for.

I answer, first, My intention is not to burden your memory, or your practice, but to help your faith. I do not prescribe these things, as all of them necessary to be gone through in every duty of preparation; but you all know, they are such as may be used, every one of them singly in the duty; though, they that would go through them all again and again, would be no losers by it, but will find something that will be food and refreshment for their souls. But,

Secondly, Let your peculiar meditation be regulated by your peculiar present condition. Suppose, for instance, the soul is pressed with a sense of the guilt of any sin, or of many sins; let the preparative meditation be fixed upon the grace of God, and upon the love of Jesus Christ, that are suited to give relief unto the soul in such a condition. Is the soul burdened with the senselessness of sin? Doth it not find itself so sensible of sin as it would be? but rather, that it can entertain slight thoughts of sin; let meditation

be principally directed unto the great guilt of sin as represented in the death and cross of Christ, and to the severity of God as there represented. Other things may lay hold upon our carnal affections, but if this lay not hold upon faith, nothing will.

I have one rule more in these meditations; Doth any thing fall in that doth peculiarly affect your spirits, as to that regard which you have to God? Set it down. Most Christians are poor in experience; they have no stock; they have not laid up any thing for a dear year, or a hard time: though they may have had many tokens for good, yet they have forgot them. When your hearts are raised by intercourse between God and yourselves in the performance of this duty, be at pains to set them down for your own use; if any thing do immediately affect your spirits, you will be no looser by it; it is as easy a way to grow rich in spiritual experiences as any I know. This is the first part of this duty of preparation, which, with the rules given, may be constantly so observed, as to be no way burdensome nor wearisome to you; but very much to your advantage. The other duties I shall but name, and so have done.

2. There is examination. Examination is the word of my text, and that duty which most have commonly spoke unto, that have treated any thing about preparation for this ordinance. It respects principally two things, viz. repentance and faith.

(1.) Our examination as to repentance, as far as it concerns preparation unto this duty, may be referred to three heads:

[1.] To call ourselves to account, whether indeed we have habitually that mourning frame of spirit upon us which is required in them who converse with God in the cross of Jesus Christ. 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn.' There is an habitual mourning frame of spirit required in us, and we may do well to search ourselves about it, whether it is maintained, and kept up or no? Whether worldly security and carnal joys do not devour it? For spiritual joys will not do it. Spiritual joys will take off nothing from spiritual mourning; but worldly security and carnal joy and pleasures will devour that frame of spirit.

[2.] Our examination as to repentance respects actual

sins, especially as for those who have the privilege and advantage of frequent and ordinary participation of this ordinance. It respects the surprisals that have befallen us (as there is no man that doth good and sinneth not) since we received the last pledge of the love of God in the administration of that ordinance. Friends, let us not be afraid of calling ourselves to a strict account. We have to do with him 'that is greater than we, and knoweth all things.' Let us not be afraid to look into the book of conscience and conversation, to look over our surprisals, our neglects, our sinful failings and miscarriages. These things belong to this preparation, to look over them and mourn over them also. I would not be thought to myself or you, to prescribe a hard burden in this duty of preparation. It is nothing but what God expects from us, and what we must do if we intend any communion with him in this ordinance. I may add,

[3.] Whether we have kept alive our last received pledges of the love of God? It may be at an ordinance we have received some special intimations of the good will of God. It is our duty to keep them alive in our spirits; and let us never be afraid we shall have no room for more. The keeping of them makes way for what farther is to come. Have we lost such sensible impressions, there is then matter for repentance and humiliation.

(2.) Examination also concerns faith; and that in general and in particular. In general; Is not my heart hypocritical? or do I really do what in this ordinance I profess? which is placing all my faith and hope in Jesus Christ for life, mercy, salvation, and for peace with God. And in particular, Do I stir up and act faith to meet Christ in this ordinance? I shall not enlarge upon these things that are commonly spoken unto.

3. The third part of our preparation is supplication; that is, adding prayer to this meditation and examination. Add prayer, which may inlay and digest all the rest in the soul. Pray over what we have thought on, what we have conceived, what we have apprehended, what we desire, and what we fear; gather all up into supplications to God.

4. There belongs unto this duty expectation also; that is, to expect that God will answer his promise, and meet us

according to the desire of our hearts. We should look to meet God, because he hath promised to meet us there; and we go upon his promise of grace, expecting he will answer his word and meet us. Not going at all adventures, as not knowing whether we shall find him or not; God may indeed then surprise us as he did Jacob when he appeared unto him, and made him say, 'God is in this place, and I knew it not.' But we go where we know God is. He hath placed his name upon his ordinances, and there he is; go to them with expectation, and rise from the rest of the duties with this expectation.

This is the substance of what might be of use to some in reference unto this duty of preparation for this great and solemn ordinance, which God hath graciously given unto any of you the privilege to be made partakers of.

Have we failed in these things or in things of a like nature? Let us admire the infinite patience of God, that hath borne with us all this while, that he hath not cast us out of his house, that he hath not deprived us of these enjoyments, which he might justly have done, when we have so undervalued them, as far as lay in us, and despised them; when we have had so little care to make entertainment for the receiving of the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to visit us in this ordinance. We may be ready to complain of what outward concerns, in and about the worship of God, some have been deprived of. We have infinite more reason to admire, that there is any thing left unto us, any name, any place, any nail, any remembrance in the house of God; considering the regardlessness which hath been upon our spirits in our communion with him. Go away, and 'sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us.' If there be any, that have not risen up in a due manner in this duty, any conviction of the necessity and usefulness of it, God forbid we should be found sinning against this conviction.

DISCOURSE VII.*

I SHALL shew briefly what it is to obtain a sacramental part of Jesus Christ in this ordinance of the Lord's supper.

It is a great mystery, and great wisdom and exercise of faith lie in it, how to obtain a participation of Christ. When the world had lost an understanding of this mystery for want of spiritual sight, they contrived a means to make it up, that should be easy on the part of them that did partake, and very prodigious on the part of them that administered. The priest, with a few words, turned the bread into the body of Christ; and the people have no more to do but to put it into their mouths, and so Christ is partaken of. It was the loss of the mystery of faith in the real participation of Christ, that put them on that invention.

Neither is there in this ordinance a naked figure, a naked representation: there is something in the figure, something in the representation, but there is not all in it. When the bread is broken, it is a figure, a representation that the body of Christ was broken for us; and the pouring out of the wine is a figure and representation of the pouring of the blood of Christ, or the pouring forth of his soul unto death. And there are useful meditations that may arise from thence. But in this ordinance there is a real exhibition of Christ unto every believing soul.

I shall a little inquire into it, to lead your faith into a due exercise in it, under the administration of this ordinance.

First, The exhibition and tender of Christ, in this ordinance, is distinct from the tender of Christ in the promise of the gospel; as in many other things, so it is in this. In the promise of the gospel the person of the Father is principally looked upon, as proposing and tendering Christ unto us. In this ordinance, Christ tendered himself, 'This is my body;' saith he, 'do this in remembrance of me.' He makes an immediate tender of himself unto a believing soul; and calls our faith unto a respect to his grace, to his love, to his readiness to unite, and spiritually to incorporate with us. Again,

* Delivered July 7, 1673.

Secondly, It is a tender of Christ, and an exhibition of Christ under an especial consideration; not in general, but under this consideration, as he is, as it were, 'newly' (so the word is) 'sacrificed;' as he is a new and fresh sacrifice in the great work of reconciling, making peace with God, making an end of sin, doing all that was to be done between God and sinners, that they might be at peace.

Christ makes a double representation of himself, as the great Mediator upon his death, and the oblation and sacrifice which he accomplished thereby.

He represents himself unto God in heaven, there to do whatever remains to be done with God on our behalf, by his intercession. The intercession of Christ is nothing but the presentation of himself unto God, upon his oblation and sacrifice.

He presents himself unto God to do with him what remains to be done on our part, to procure mercy and grace for us.

He presents himself unto us in this ordinance, to do with us what remains to be done on the part of God; and this answers to his intercession above, which is the counterpart of his present mediation, to do with us what remains on the part of God, to give out peace and mercy in the seal of the covenant unto our souls.

There is this special exhibition of Jesus Christ, and it is given directly for this special exercise of faith, that we may know how to receive him in this ordinance.

1. We receive him as one that hath actually accomplished the great work (so he tenders himself) of making peace with God for us; for the blotting out of sins, and for the bringing in everlasting righteousness. He doth not tender himself as one that can do these things. It is a relief when we have an apprehension that Christ can do all this for us: nor doth he tender himself as one that will do these things upon any such or such conditions, as shall be prescribed unto us. But he tenders himself unto our faith, as one that hath done these things; and as such are we to receive him, if we intend to glorify him in this ordinance; as one that hath actually done this, actually made peace for us, actually blotted out our sins, and purchased eternal redemption for us.

Brethren, can we receive Christ thus? Are we willing to

receive him thus? If so, we may go away and be no more sorrowful. If we come short herein, we come short of that faith which is required of us in this ordinance. Pray let us endeavour to consider, how Jesus Christ doth hereby make a tender of himself unto us, as one that hath actually taken away all our sins, and all our iniquities, that none of them shall ever be laid unto our charge: and to receive him as such, is to give glory unto him.

2. He tenders himself as one that hath done this work by his death; for it is the remembrance of his death in a peculiar manner that we celebrate. What there is of love, what there is of efficacy, of power and comfort in that, what there is of security, I may have occasion another time to speak unto you. At present this is all I would offer; that for the doing of these great things, for the doing the greatest, the hardest things that our faith is exercised about, which are the pardon of our sins, and the acceptation of our persons with God, for the accomplishment hereof, he died an accursed death; and that death had no power over him, but the bands of it were loosed; he rose from under it, and was acquitted. Let us act faith on Jesus Christ, as one that brings with him mercy and pardon, as that which was procured by his death, against which lies no exception. I could shew you that nothing was too hard for it, that nothing was left to be done by it, which we are to receive.

3. To be made partakers of him in this sacramental tender, by submitting unto his authority in his institutions, by assenting unto the truth of his word in the promise, that he will be present with us, and give himself unto us, and by approving of that glorious way of making peace for us, which he hath trodden and gone in, in his sufferings, and in our stead: to get a view of Christ, as tendering himself unto every one of our souls in this ordinance of his own institution, as he who hath perfectly made an end of all differences between God and us, and who brings along with him all the mercy and grace that is in the heart of God, and in his covenant: to have such a view of him, and so to receive him by faith, that it shall be life unto our souls, is the way to give glory unto God, and to have peace and rest in our own bosoms.

4. And lastly, in one word, faith is so to receive him, as

to enable us to sit down at God's table, as those that are the Lord's friends; as those that are invited to feast upon the sacrifice. The sacrifice is offered, Christ is the sacrifice, God's passover; God makes a feast upon it, and invites his friends to sit down at his table, there being now no difference between him and us. Let us pray that he would help us to exercise faith to this purpose.

DISCOURSE VIII.*

You know I usually speak a few words to prepare us for this ordinance: you know it is an ordinance of calling to remembrance, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' There was under the Old Testament but one sacrifice to call any thing to remembrance; and God puts a mark upon that sacrifice, as that which was not, as it were, well-pleasing unto him, but only what necessity did require, and that was 'the sacrifice of jealousy,' Numb. v. 15. Saith God, 'There shall be no oil in it' (a token of peace); 'there shall be no frankincense' (that should yield a sweet savour), 'for it is a sacrifice to bring iniquity to remembrance.' This great ordinance of the Lord's supper, is not to call iniquity to remembrance, but it is to call to remembrance the putting an end to iniquity; God will make an end of sin, and this ordinance is our solemn remembrance of it.

Now there are sundry things that we are to call to remembrance. I have done my endeavour to help you to call the love of Christ to remembrance. The Lord I trust hath guided my thoughts now to direct you to call the sufferings of Christ unto remembrance. I know it may be a suitable meditation to take up your minds and mine, in and under this ordinance. It is our duty in this holy ordinance solemnly to call to remembrance the sufferings of Christ.

It is said of the preaching of the gospel, that 'Jesus Christ is therein evidently crucified before our eyes,' Gal. iii. 1. And if Christ be evidently crucified before our eyes in the preaching of the gospel, Christ is much more evidently

* Delivered November 2, 1673.

crucified before our eyes in the administration of this ordinance, which is instituted for that very end. And certainly, when Christ is crucified before our eyes, we ought deeply to consider his sufferings. It would be a great sign of a hard and senseless heart in us, if we were not willing in some measure to consider his sufferings upon such an occasion. We are, therefore, solemnly to remember them.

Well, shall I a little mind myself and you, how we may, and how we ought to call to remembrance the sufferings of Christ.

Let us remember that we ourselves were obnoxious unto these sufferings. The curse lay doubly upon us. The original curse, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' lay upon us all. The consequent curse, 'Cursed be every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;' that also lay upon us all; we were under both, the original and the consequent curse. We know what is in the curse, even all the anger and wrath that a displeased holy God can and will inflict upon sinful creatures to all eternity. In this state and condition then, all lay upon us, and all must lie upon us, unless we come to have an interest in the sufferings of Christ, there is no relief for us. I will not insist upon calling to your mind, that heaven and earth, and all God's creation combining together, could not have procured relief for one of our souls. Christ, the Son of God, offered himself, and said, 'Lo, I come.' Indeed it was a good saying of David, it was nobly said, when he saw the angel of the Lord destroying the people with a pestilence, 'Lord,' saith he, 'it is I, and my father's house that have sinned; but as for these sheep,' these poor people, 'what have they done?' It was otherwise with Christ; he came in the place of sinners, and said, Let not these poor sheep die. If God would, by faith, give your souls and mine a view of the voluntary substitution of Jesus Christ in his person, in our room and on our behalf, it would comfort and refresh us. When the curse of God was ready to break forth upon us, God accepted of this tender, of this offer of Christ: 'Lo, I come to do thy will,' to be a sacrifice: and what did he do? Why, saith he, this God did; then if he will come, if he will do it, let him plainly know how the case stands;

the curse is upon them, wrath is upon them, punishment must be undergone; my holiness, faithfulness, righteousness, and truth, are all engaged. Yet, saith Christ, 'Lo, I come.' Well, what doth God do? He tells you, Isa. liii. 6. 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath caused all our iniquities to meet upon him.' God so far relaxed his own law, that the sentence shall not fall upon their persons, but upon their substitute, one that hath put himself in their place and stead. Be it so; all their iniquities be upon thee; all the iniquities of this congregation, saith God, be upon my Son Jesus Christ.

Well, what then did he suffer? He suffered that which answered the justice of God. He suffered that which answered the law of God. He suffered that which fully repaired the glory of God. Brethren, let us encourage ourselves in the Lord. If there be any demands to be made of you or me, it must be upon the account of the righteousness and justice of God; or upon the account of the law of God; or upon the account of the loss that God suffered in his glory by us. If the Lord Jesus hath come in, and answered all these, we have a good plea to make in the presence of the holy God.

1. He suffered all that the justice of God did require. Hence it is said, 'that God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the forgiveness of sins;' Rom. iii. 25. And you may observe, that the apostle uses the very same words in respect of Christ's sufferings, that he uses in respect of the sufferings of the damned angels. Rom. viii. 32. 'God spared him not.' And when he would speak of the righteousness of God in inflicting punishment upon the sinning angels, he doth it by that very word, 'God spared them not.' So that whatever the righteousness of God did require against sinners, Christ therein was not spared at all. What God required against your sins and mine, and all his elect, God spared him nothing, but he paid the utmost farthing.

2. The sufferings of Christ did answer the law of God. That makes the next demand of us. The law is that which requires our poor guilty souls to punishment, in the name of the justice of God. Why, saith the apostle, 'He hath re-

deemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us;' Gal. iii. 13. by undergoing and suffering the curse of the law, he redeemed us from it.

3. He suffered every thing that was required to repair and make up the glory of God. Better you and I and all the world should perish, than God should be endamaged in his glory. It is a truth, and I hope God will bring all our hearts to say, Christ hath suffered to make up that. The obedience that was in the sufferings of Christ, brought more glory unto God, than the disobedience of Adam, who was the original of the apostacy of the whole creation from God, brought dishonour unto him. That which seemed to reflect great dishonour upon God was, that all his creatures should as one man fall off by apostacy from him. God will have his honour repaired, and it is done by the obedience of Christ much more. There cometh, I say, more glory to God by the obedience of Christ and his sufferings, than there did dishonour by the disobedience of Adam; and so there comes more glory by Christ's sufferings and obedience upon the cross, than by the sufferings of the damned for ever. God loses no glory by setting believers free from suffering, because of the sufferings of the Son of God. This was a fruit of eternal wisdom.

Now having thus touched a little upon the sufferings of Christ, what shall we do in a way of duty?

(1.) Let us, by faith, consider truly and really this great substitution of Jesus Christ; the just suffering for the unjust; in our stead, in our room, undergoing what we should have undergone. The Lord help us to admire the infinite holiness, righteousness, and truth that is in it: we are not able to comprehend these things in it; but if God enables us to exercise faith upon it, we shall admire it. Whence is it that the Son of God should be substituted in our place? Pray remember, that we are now representing this infinite effect of divine wisdom in substituting Jesus Christ in our room, to undergo the wrath and curse of God for us.

(2.) Let us learn from the cross of Christ, what indeed is in our sins; that when Christ, the Son of God, in whom he was always well pleased, that did the whole will of God was in his bosom from all eternity, came and substituted himself in our room, 'God spared him not.' Let not any sin-

nor under heaven that is estranged from Christ, ever think to be spared. If God would have spared any, he would have spared his only Son. But if he will be a mediator of the covenant, God will not spare him, though his own Son. We may acquaint you hereafter, what it cost Christ to stand in the room of sinners. The Lord from thence give our hearts some sense of that great provocation that is in sin, that we may mourn before him, when we look upon him whom our sins have pierced.

(3.) Will God help us to take a view of the issue of all this, of the substitution of Jesus Christ, placing him in our stead, putting his soul in the place of our souls; his person in the place of our persons; of the commutation of punishment, in which the righteousness, holiness, and wisdom of God laid that on him which was due unto us. What is the issue of all this? It is to bring us unto God; to peace with God, and acquitment from all our sins; and to make us acceptable with the righteous, holy, and faithful God; to give us boldness before him; this is the issue. Let us consider this issue of the sufferings of Christ, and be thankful.

DISCOURSE IX.*

It is the table of the Lord that we are invited to draw nigh unto. Our Lord hath a large heart and bountiful hand; hath made plentiful provision for our souls at this table; and he saith unto us, by his Spirit, in his word, 'Eat, O my friends, yea, drink abundantly.' It is that feast that God hath provided for sinners. And there are three sorts of sinners that I would speak a word unto, to stir them up unto a due exercise of faith in this ordinance, according as their condition doth require. There are such as are not sensible of their sins, so as they ought to be; they know they are not; they are not able to get their hearts affected with their sins, as they desire. There are some that are so burdened, and overpressed with the sense of their sins, that they are scarce able to hold up under the weight of them; under the doubts and fears wherewith they are distressed. And there

* Delivered February 22, 1673-4.

are sinners, who are in enjoyment of a sense of the pardon of sin; and do desire to have hearts to improve it in thankfulness and fruitfulness.

Something of these several frames may be in us all; yet it may be, one is predominant, one is chief; one in one, another in another; and therefore I will speak a few words distinctly to them all.

1. There are sinners who are believers, who cannot get their hearts and spirits affected with sin so as they ought, and so as they desire. There is not a sadder complaint of the church, as I know, in the whole book of God, than that, Isa. lxiii. 17. 'Why hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear?' Poor creatures may come unto that perplexity through an apprehension of the want of a due sense of the guilt of sin, as to be ready thus to cry out, Why is it thus with me? Why am I so senseless under the guilt of all the sins that I have contracted? I have a word of direction unto such persons. Are there such among us? It is a direction unto faith to be acting in this ordinance. It is that which we have, Zech. xii. 10. 'They shall look unto him whom they have pierced, and mourn.' Why, brethren, Christ is represented unto us in this ordinance, as he was pierced, as his precious blood was poured out for us. Let us act faith, if God help us, in two things:

(1.) Upon the dolorous sufferings of Christ, which are represented here unto us. Let us take a view of the Son of God under the curse of God.

(2.) Remember that all these sufferings were for us; 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and then mourn.' The acting of faith upon the sufferings of Christ, as one that suffered for us, is the great means in this ordinance to bring our hearts to mourn for sin indeed. Therefore pray, let us beg of God, whoever of us are in any measure under this frame, that our insensibleness of the guilt and burden of sin may be our great burden. Let us try the power of faith in this ordinance, by getting our hearts affected with the sufferings of Christ in our behalf. Let us bind it to our hearts and consciences; and may the Lord give a blessing.

2. There are others who, it may be, are pressed under the weight of their sins; walk mournfully, walk disconsolately.

I know there are some so, in the condition expressed by the psalmist, Psal. xl. 12. 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.' Some may be in that condition that their hearts are ready to fail them, through the multitude of their iniquities taking hold upon them. What would you direct such unto in this ordinance? Truly, that which is given, John iii. 14, 15. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' The Lord Jesus Christ is lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; and here he is lifted up, as bearing all our sins in his own body upon the tree. Here is a representation made unto poor sinners whose hearts are most burdened; here is Jesus Christ lifted up with all our sins upon the tree. Let such a soul labour to have a view of Christ as bearing all our iniquities, that believing on him we should not perish, but have life everlasting. God hath appointed him to be crucified evidently before our eyes, that every poor soul that is stung with sin, ready to die by sin, should look up unto him, and be healed; and virtue will go forth, if we look upon him, for 'by his stripes we are healed.'

3. There may be some that live in full satisfaction of the pardon of their sins, and are solicitous how their hearts may be drawn forth unto thankfulness and fruitfulness. Remember that place, Rev. i. 5, 6. 'To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Remember this, that whatever your state and condition be, you have here a proper object for faith to exercise itself upon; only be not wanting unto your own comfort and advantage.

DISCOURSE X.*

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. xxviii. 20.

By 'the end of the world' we are to understand the consummation of all things; when all church work is done, and all church duties are over; when the time comes that we shall pray no more, hear no more, no more administer ordinances; but till then, saith Christ, take this for your life and for your comfort, Do what I command you, and you shall have my presence with you.

There are three things whereby Christ makes good this promise, and is with his church to the end of the world.

First, By his Spirit. 'Wherever,' saith he, 'two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;' Matt. xviii. 20. by his quickening, guiding, directing Spirit, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, as a Spirit of light and holiness, and as a Spirit of comfort.

Secondly, Christ is present with us by his word. Saith the apostle, Col. iii. 16. 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,' or plentifully. And how then? 'Then,' saith he, Eph. iii. 17. 'Christ dwelleth in us by faith.' The word dwelleth in us plentifully, if mixed with faith; and Christ dwelleth in us; he is present with us by his word.

Thirdly, Christ is present with us in an especial manner in this ordinance. One of the greatest engines that ever the devil made use of to overthrow the faith of the church, was by forging such a presence of Christ as is not truly in this ordinance, to drive us off from looking after that presence which is true. I look upon it as one of the greatest engines that ever hell set on work. It is not a corporeal presence; there are innumerable arguments against that; every thing that is in sense, reason, and the faith of a man, overthrows that corporeal presence. But I will remind you of one or two texts wherewith it is inconsistent. The first is that

* Delivered May 17, 1674.

in John xvi. 7. 'Nevertheless,' saith our Saviour, 'it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.' The corporeal presence of Christ, and the evangelical presence of the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter, in the New Testament, are inconsistent. I must 'go away, or the Comforter will not come.' But, he so went away as to his presence, as to come again with his bodily presence, as often as the priests call. No, saith Peter, Acts iii. 21. 'The heavens must receive him;' for how long? 'till the time of the restitution of all things.' I go away as to my bodily presence, or the Comforter will not come; and when he is gone away, the heavens must receive him until the time of the restitution of all things. We must not therefore look after such a presence.

I will give you a word or two, what is the presence of Christ with us in this ordinance; what is our duty; and how we may meet with Christ when he is thus present with us; which is the work I have in hand. Christ is present in this ordinance in an especial manner three ways: by representation; by exhibition; by obsignation, or sealing.

I. He is present here by representation. So in a low, shadowy way God was present in the tabernacle, in the temple, in the ark and mercy-seat; they had a representation of his glory. But Christ here hath given us a more eminent and clear representation of himself. I will name but two things:

1. A representation of himself, as he is the food of our souls.

2. A representation of himself, as he suffered for our sins.

These are two great ways whereby Christ is represented as the food of our souls, in the matter of the ordinance; and Christ as suffering for our sins is represented in the manner of the ordinance; both by his own appointment. The apostle saith, Gal. iii. 1. 'Jesus Christ was evidently crucified before their eyes.' 'Evidently crucified,' doth not intend particularly this ordinance, but the preaching of the gospel, which gave a delineation, a picture, and image of the crucifixion of Christ unto the faith of believers. But of all things that belong unto the gospel, he is most evidently crucified before our eyes in this ordinance; and it is agreed

on all hands, that Christ is represented unto the soul in this ordinance. How shall we do this? shall we do it by crucifixes, pictures, and images? No; they are all cursed of that God who said, 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image.' But that way by which God himself, and Christ himself hath appointed to represent these things unto us, that he blesses, and makes effectual. This way, as I have often shewed, is the way that was chosen by the wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ; the name of God is upon it; it is blessed unto us, and will be effectual, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

II. Christ is present with us, by way of exhibition; that is, he doth really tender and exhibit himself unto the souls of believers in this ordinance, which the world hath lost, and knows not what to make of it. They exhibit that which they do not contain. This bread doth not contain the body of Christ, or the flesh of Christ; the cup doth not contain the blood of Christ, but they exhibit them; both do as really exhibit them to believers, as they partake of the outward signs. Certainly we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ doth not invite us unto this table for the bread that perishes, for outward food; it is to feed our souls. What do we think then? doth he invite us unto an empty, painted feast? do we deal so with our friends? Here is something really exhibited by Jesus Christ unto us, to receive, besides the outward pledges of bread and wine. We must not think the Lord Jesus Christ deludes our souls with empty shows and appearances. That which is exhibited is himself, it is 'his flesh as meat indeed, and his blood as drink indeed;' it is himself as broken and crucified, that he exhibits unto us. And it is the fault and sin of every one of us if we do not receive him this day, when an exhibition and tender is made unto us, as here by way of food. To what end do we receive it? truly we receive it for these two ends: for incorporation; for nourishment.

1. We receive our food, that it may incorporate and turn into blood and spirits, that it may become one with us; and when we have so done,

2. Our end and design is, that we may be nourished, nature strengthened, comforted, and supported, and we enabled for the duties of life.

Christ doth exhibit himself unto our souls, if we are not wanting unto ourselves, for these two things, incorporation and nourishment; to be received into union, and to give strength unto our souls.

III. Christ is present in this ordinance by way of obsignation: he comes here to seal the covenant; and therefore the cup is called, 'the new testament in the blood of Christ.' How in the blood of Christ? It is the new covenant that was sealed, ratified, confirmed, and made so stable as you have heard, by the blood of Jesus Christ. For from the foundation of the world, no covenant was ever intended to be established, but it was confirmed by blood; and this covenant is confirmed by the blood of Christ; and he comes and seals the covenant with his own blood in the administration of this ordinance.

Well, if Jesus Christ be thus present by way of representation, exhibition and obsignation, what is required of us that we may meet him, and be present with him? For it is not our mere coming hither that is a meeting with Christ; it is a work of faith: and there are three acts of faith whereby we may be present with Christ, who is thus present with us.

1. The first is by recognition, answering his representation. As Christ in this ordinance doth represent his death unto us, so we are to remember it, and call it over. Pray consider how things were done formerly in reference unto it. The paschal lamb was an ordinance for remembrance; it is a night to be had in remembrance; and this they should do for a remembrance; and it was to be eaten with bitter herbs. There was once a year a feast wherein all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of the children of Israel were called to remembrance; and it was to be done by greatly afflicting of their souls. If we intend to call to remembrance the death of Christ, we may do well to do it with some bitter herbs; there should be some remembrance of sin with it, some brokenness of heart for sin, with respect to him who was pierced and broken for us. Our work is to call over and shew forth the death of Christ. Pray, brethren, let us a little consider, whether our hearts be suitably affected with respect to our sins, which were upon Jesus Christ when he died for us, or no; lest we draw nigh unto him with

the outward bodily presence, when our hearts are far from him.

2. If Christ be present with us by way of exhibition, we ought to be present by way of admission. It will not advantage you or me that Christ tenders himself unto us, unless we receive him. This is the great work; herein lies the main work upon all the members of the church. When we are to dispense the word, the first work lies upon ministers; and when the work is sufficiently discharged, they will be a good savour unto God in them that believe, and in them that perish: but in this ordinance, the main work lies upon yourselves. If in the name of Christ we make a tender of him unto you, and he be not actually received, there is but half the work done; so that you are in a peculiar manner to stir up yourselves, as having a more especial interest in this duty, than in any other duty of the church whatsoever; and you may take a better measure of yourselves by your acting in this duty, than of us by our acting in the ministry. Let Christ be received into your hearts by faith and love, upon this particular tender that he assuredly makes in this ordinance of himself unto you; for, as I said, he hath not invited you unto an empty painted feast or table.

3. Know what you come to meet him for, which is, to seal the covenant; solemnly to take upon yourselves again the performance of your part of the covenant. I hope I speak in a deep sense of the thing itself, and that which I have much thought of. This is that which ruins the world, the hearing that God hath made a covenant of grace and mercy, it is preached to them, and declared unto them, and they think to be saved by this covenant, though they themselves do not perform what the covenant requires on their part. What great and glorious words do we speak in the covenant, that God gives himself over unto us to be our God! Brethren, there is our giving ourselves unto God (to answer this) universally and absolutely. If we give ourselves unto the world, and to our lusts, and to self, we are not to expect any benefit by God's covenant of grace. If it be not made up by our sealing of the covenant of grace, or by a universal resignation of ourselves in all that we are and do unto him, we do not meet Jesus Christ; we disappoint him when he comes to seal the covenant. Where is this people,

saith Christ, that would enter into covenant with me? Let it be in our hearts to see him seal the covenant of grace as represented in this ordinance; and to take upon ourselves the performance of what is required of us, by a universal giving up ourselves unto God.

DISCOURSE XI.*

I SHALL now produce some few places of Scripture, one especially, that may administer occasion unto you for the exercise of faith, the great duty required of us at this time. You may do well to think of these words of the prophet concerning Jesus Christ, concerning his sufferings and death, which we are here gathered together in his name to remember. They are,

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.—Isa. liii. 11.

There are two things that the Holy Ghost minds us of in these words:

First, That Jesus Christ was in a great travail of soul to bring forth the redemption and salvation of the church.

Secondly, He minds us that Jesus Christ was satisfied, and much rejoiced in the consideration of the effects and fruits of the travail of his soul.

I shall speak a word to both, and a word to shew you how both these things are called over in this ordinance, both the travail of the soul of Christ, and his satisfaction in the fruit of that travail.

First, Christ was in a great travail of soul to bring forth the redemption and salvation of the church. It was a great work that Christ had to do. It is usually said, we are not saved as the world was made, by a word; but there was travail in it; it is the word whereby the bringing forth of children into the world is expressed; the travail of a woman; and there are three things in that travail: an agony of mind; outcrying for help; and sense of pain; all these things were in the travail of the soul of Christ. I will name the Scriptures to call them to your remembrance.

* Delivered Aug. 9, 1674.

1. 'He was in an agony;' Luke xxii. 44. An agony is an inexpressible conflict of mind about things dreadful and terrible. So it was with Christ. No heart can conceive, much less can tongue express, the conflict that was in the soul of Jesus Christ with the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the pains of hell and death, that stood before him in this work of our redemption. There was an agony.

2. There was an outcrying for help; Heb. v. 7. 'Who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him.' Such is the outcry of a person in travail, crying out unto them that are able to save them. So it was with Jesus Christ when he was in the travail of his soul about our salvation. He made these strong cries unto God, to him that was able to save him.

3. There was pain in it, which is the last thing in travail; so that he complained that the pains of hell had taken hold upon him. Whatever pain there was in the curse of the law, in the wrath of God; whatever the justice of God did ever design to inflict upon sinners, was then upon the soul of Jesus Christ; so that he was in travail. That is the first thing I would mind you of; that in the bringing forth the work of our redemption and salvation, the Lord Jesus was in travail.

Secondly, It was a satisfaction, a rejoicing unto the Lord Jesus Christ, to consider the fruits and effects of this travail of his soul, which God had promised he should see. He was satisfied in the prospect he had of the fruit of the travail of his soul. So the apostle tells us, Heb. xii. 2. 'That, for the joy that was set before him,' which was the joy of bringing us unto God, of being the captain of salvation unto them that should obey him, 'he endured the cross and despised the shame;' he went through all with a prospect he had of the fruit of his travail; there would joy come out of it; the joy that was set before him; as he speaks, Psal. xvi. 6. where God presents unto him what he shall have by this travail, what he shall get by it; saith he, 'The lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place, yea, I have a goodly heritage.' It is the satisfaction that Jesus Christ (who is there spoken of only in that psalm) takes in the fruit of the travail of his soul; he is contented with it. He

doth not do as Hiram, who when Solomon gave him the twenty cities in the land of Galilee, calls them, 'Cabul, they were dirty, and they displeased him;' 1 Kings ix. 11, &c. No; but, 'the lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place;' he rejoiced in his travail. It is expressed, in my apprehension, to the height, in Jer. xxxi. 25, 26. 'I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.' What follows? 'Upon this I awaked, and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me.' They are the words of Jesus Christ; and he speaks concerning his death, wherein he was as asleep in the grave. Now consider what was the effect and fruit of it? It was sweet unto Jesus Christ after all the travail of his soul, that he had 'satiated the weary soul,' and 'replenished every sorrowful soul.'

In one word, both these things, the travail of the soul of Christ, and the satisfaction he took in the fruit of his travail, are represented unto us in this ordinance.

There is the travail of the soul of Christ to us in the manner of the participation of this ordinance, in the breaking of the bread, and in the pouring out of the wine, representing unto us the breaking of the body of Christ, the shedding of his blood, and the separation of the one from the other, which was the cause of his death. Now though these were outward things in Christ (because the travail of his soul cannot be represented by any outward things, wherein the great work of our redemption lay), we are in this ordinance to be led through these outward things to the travail of the soul of Christ: we are not to rest in the mere outward act or acts of the breaking of the body of Christ, and pouring out of his blood, the separation of the one from the other, and of his death thereby, but through all them we are to inquire, What is under them? There was Christ's making his soul an offering for sin; there was Christ's being made a curse under them, Christ's travail of soul in an agony to bring forth the redemption and salvation of the church.

Brethren, let us be able by faith not only to look through these outward signs, to that which makes the representation itself unto us, the body and blood of Christ; but even with them and through them in the travail of the soul of Christ; the work that he was doing between God and himself for the redemption of the church.

And here is also a representation made unto us of that satisfaction the soul of Christ received in the fruit of his travail, having appointed it in a particular manner to be done in remembrance of him. No man will appoint a remembrance of that which he doth not delight in. When Job had no more delight in his life, he desired that the time of his birth might never be remembered. When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, whereby he exalted his glory, he appointed a passover, and said, 'It was a day greatly to be remembered;' because the people had a great deliverance, and God received great glory and great satisfaction, therefore it was greatly to be remembered. We are to celebrate this ordinance in remembrance of Christ, and therefore there is a representation of that satisfaction which Jesus Christ did receive in the travail of his soul, so that he never repented him of one groan, of one sigh, of one tear, of one prayer, of one wrestling with the wrath of God. It is matter of rejoicing and to be remembered; and do you rejoice in the remembrance of it.

Again; It is apparent from hence, because this ordinance is in an especial manner an ordinance of thanksgiving; the bread that is blessed, or which we give thanks for; the cup which is blessed: Christ gave thanks. Now if hereby we give thanks, it is to call to remembrance, not merely the travail of Christ's soul, but the success of that travail; hereby all differences were made up between God and us; hereby grace and glory were purchased for us, and he became the captain of salvation unto us.

To shut up all, here is by Christ's institution bread and wine provided for us; but it is bread broken and wine poured out. There are two things in it, there is the weak part that is Christ's, there is the nourishing part that is given unto us: the Lord Christ hath chosen, by this ordinance, to represent himself by these things that are the staff of our lives; they comprise the whole nourishment and sustenance of our bodies. He hath so chosen to represent them by breaking and pouring out, that shall signify his sufferings; here are both, as the bread is broken, and as the wine is poured out, there is the representation of the travail of the soul of Christ to us: as bread is received, and the cup, which is the means of the nourishment of man's life, here is

the fruit of Christ's death exhibited unto us, and his sufferings. The Lord help us to look into the satisfaction that Christ received from this, that we may be partakers of the one and the other.

DISCOURSE XII.*

We are met here to remember, to celebrate, and set forth the death of Christ, to profess and plead our interest therein. And there are two things that we should principally consider in reference to ourselves, and our duty, and the death of Christ. The first is, The benefits of it, and our participation of them. And the second is, Our conformity unto it; both are mentioned together by the apostle in

Phil. iii. 10.—*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

I shall speak a word or two (upon this occasion of remembering the death of Christ), unto the latter clause, of our 'being made conformable unto his death,' wherein a very great part of our due preparation unto this ordinance doth consist; and for the furtherance whereof we do in an especial manner wait upon God in this part of his worship. Therefore I shall in a few words mind you wherein we ought to be conformable unto the death of Christ, and how we are advantaged therein by this ordinance.

We are to be conformable unto the death of Christ, in the internal, moral cause of it, and in the external means of it.

The cause of the death of Christ, was sin. The means of the death of Christ, was suffering. Our being conformable unto the death of Christ, must respect sin and suffering.

The procuring cause of the death of Christ was sin. He died for sin; he died for our sin; our iniquities were upon him, and were the cause of all the punishment that befell him.

* Delivered February 21, 1674-5.

Wherein can we be conformable unto the death of Christ with respect unto sin? We cannot die for sin. Our hope and faith is, in and through him, that we shall never die for sin. No mortal man can be made like unto Christ in suffering for sin. Those that undergo what he underwent, because they were unlike him, must go to hell and be made more unlike him to eternity. Therefore the apostle tells us, that our conformity unto the death of Christ with respect unto sin lies in this, That as he died for sin, so we should die unto sin; that, that sin which he died for, should die in us. He tells us so, Rom. vi. 5. 'We are planted together in the likeness of his death;' we are made conformable unto the death of Christ, planted into him, so as to have a likeness to him in his death. Wherein? 'Knowing that our old man is crucified with him,' saith he, ver. 6. It is the crucifixion of the old man, the crucifying of the body of sin, the mortifying of sin, that makes us conformable unto the death of Christ, as to the internal moral cause of it, that procures it. See another apostle tells us, 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. 'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' Here is our conformity to Christ, as he suffered in the flesh, that we should no longer live to our lusts, nor unto the will of man, but unto the will of God. And, brethren, let me tell you, he who approacheth unto this remembrance of the death of Christ, that hath not laboured, that doth not labour for conformity to his death in the universal mortification of all sin, runs a hazard to his soul, and puts an affront upon Jesus Christ. O let none of us come in a way of thankfulness to remember the death of Jesus Christ, and bring along with us the murderer whereby he was slain. To harbour with us, and bring along with us to the death of Christ, unmortified lusts and corruptions, such as we do not continually and sincerely endeavour to kill and mortify, is to come and upbraid Christ with his murderer, instead of obtaining any spiritual advantage; what can such poor souls expect?

To be conformable unto the death of Christ as to the outward means, is to be conformable unto him in suffering.

We here remember Christ's sufferings. And I am persuaded, and hope I have considered it, that he who is unready to be conformable unto Christ in suffering, was never upright and sincere in endeavouring to be conformable unto Christ in the killing of sin; for we are called as much to the one as to the other. Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should also suffer when we are called thereunto. And our unwillingness to suffer like unto Christ, arises from some unmortified corruption in our hearts, which we have not endeavoured to subdue, that we may be like unto Christ in the mortification and death of sin.

There are four things required that we may be conformable unto the death of Christ in suffering; for we may suffer, and yet not be like unto Christ in it nor by it.

1. The first is, That we suffer for Christ. 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16. 'Let none suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, &c. but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.' To suffer as a Christian is to suffer for Christ; for the name of Christ; for the truths of Christ; for the ways of Christ; for the worship of Christ.

2. It is required, That we suffer in the strength of Christ; that we do not suffer in the strength of our own will, our own reason, our own resolutions; but that we suffer, I say, in the strength of Christ. When we suffer aright, it is given unto us in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for him. As all other graces are to be derived from Christ, as our head and root, stock and foundation; so in particular, that grace which enables us to suffer for Christ, must be from him. And we do well to consider whether it be so or no: for if it be not, all our sufferings are lost, and not acceptable to him. It is a sacrifice without salt, yea, without a heart, that will not be accepted.

3. It is required, That we suffer in imitation of Christ, as making him our example. We are not to take up the cross but with design to follow Christ. Take up the cross, is but half the command; 'Take up the cross and follow me,' is the whole command; and we are to suffer willingly and cheerfully, or we are the most unlike Jesus Christ in our sufferings of any persons in the world. Christ was willing and cheerful; 'Lo, I come to do thy will; I have a baptism

to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?' saith he. And,

4. We are to suffer to the glory of Christ. These are things wherein we ought to endeavour conformity to the death of Christ, that we now remember. I pray, let none of us trust to the outward ordinance, the performance of the outward duty. If these things be not in us, we do not remember the Lord's death in a right manner.

How may we attain the strength and ability from this ordinance, to be made conformable to his death? that we may not come and remember the death of Christ, and go away and be more unlike him than formerly?

There is power to this end communicated to us, doctrinally, morally, and spiritually.

There is no such sermon to teach mortification of sin, as the commemoration of the death of Christ. It is the greatest outward instruction unto this duty that God hath left unto his church; and I am persuaded which he doth most bless to them who are sincere. Do we see Christ eminently crucified before our eyes, his body broken, his blood shed for sin, and is it not of powerful instruction to us, to go on to mortify sin? He that hath not learned this, never learned any thing aright from this ordinance, nor did he ever receive any benefit from it. There is a constraining power in this instruction to put us upon the mortification of sin; God grant we may see the fruit of it. It hath a teaching efficacy; it teaches, as it is peculiarly blessed of God to this end and purpose. And I hope many a soul can say, that they have received that encouragement, and that strength by it, as that they have been enabled to more steadiness and constancy in fighting against sin, and have received more success afterward.

There is a moral way whereby it communicates strength to us; because it is our duty now to engage ourselves unto this very work, meeting at the death of Christ, it is our duty to engage ourselves unto God, and that gives strength. And I would beg of you all, brethren, that not one of us would pass through or go over this ordinance, this representation of the death of Christ, without a fresh obligation to God to abide more constant and vigorous in the mortification of sin; we all need it.

And lastly, A spiritually beholding of Christ by faith, is the means to change us into the image and likeness of Christ. Beholding the death of Christ by faith as represented to us in this ordinance, is the means to change us into his image and likeness, and make us conformable unto his death, in the death of sin in us.

(1.) Take this instruction from the ordinance, as you believe in Christ, as you love him, as you desire to remember him, sin ought to be mortified, that we may be conformed unto him in his death.

(2.) That we do every one of us bring our souls under an engagement so to do, which is required of us in the very nature of the duty.

(3.) That we labour by faith so to behold a dying Christ, that strength may thence issue forth for the death of sin in our souls.

DISCOURSE XIII.*

I HAVE generally on this occasion fixed on something particular that may draw forth and guide present meditation; but I shall at present enter on what may be farther carried on, and speak a little to you about the nature and use of the ordinance itself, in which it may be, some of us (for there are of all degrees and sizes of knowledge in the church) may not be so well instructed. God has taught us, that the using of an ordinance will not be of advantage to us, unless we understand the institution, and the nature and the ends of it. It was so under the Old Testament, when their worship was more carnal, yet God would have them to know the nature and the reason of that great ordinance of the passover, as you may see in Exod. xii. 24—27. 'And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you according as he has promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover,' &c. Carry along with you the insti-

* Delivered April 18th, 1675.

tution; it is the ordinance of God, 'you shall keep this service:' then you must have the meaning of it, which is this, 'It is the Lord's passover;' and the occasion of the institution was this, 'The Lord passed over our houses when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered us out of Egypt.' There is a great mystery in that word, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover:' their deliverance was by the blood of a sacrifice; it was a sacrifice which made them look to the great sacrifice, 'Christ our passover, who was sacrificed for us.' And there is a mystical instruction, 'It is the Lord's passover,' says he; it is a pledge and sign of the Lord's passing over and sparing the Israelites, for it was not itself the Lord's passover. Christ says, 'This is my body,' that is, a pledge and token of it. Under the old testament God would not have his people to observe this great service and ordinance, but they should know the reason of it, and the end and rise of it, that it might be a service of faith.

All these things are clearly comprised in reference unto this ordinance of the Lord's supper in those words of the apostle,

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.—1 Cor. xi. 23—26.

You have both the institution and the nature, the use and ends of this ordinance in these words; and I shall speak so briefly to them, and under such short heads, as those who are young and less experienced may do well to retain.

First, There is the institution of it; 'I received it,' said he, 'from the Lord;' and he received it on this account, that the Lord appointed it; and if you would come in faith unto this ordinance, you are to consider two things in this institution.

1. The authority of Christ. It was the Lord: the Lord, the head and king of the church; our Lord, our lawgiver, our ruler, he has appointed this service; and if you would have your performance of it an act of obedience, acceptable

to God, you must get your conscience influenced with the authority of Christ, that we can give this reason in the presence of God, why we come together to perform this service, It is because Jesus Christ our Lord has appointed it; he hath required it of us: and what is done in obedience to his command, that is a part of our reasonable service, and therein we are accepted with God.

2. In the institution of it there is also his love, which is manifested in the time of its appointment; 'the Lord Jesus in that same night in which he was betrayed.' One would think that our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all the troubles, the distresses, the anguish, the sufferings, the derelictions of God, which were coming upon him, and into which he was just now entering, would have had something else to think of besides this provision for his church. But his heart was filled with love to his people; and that love which carried him to all that darkness and difficulty that he was to go through, that love at the same time did move him to institute this ordinance for the benefit and advantage of his church. And this I shall only say, that that heart which is made spiritually sensible of the love of Jesus Christ in the institution of this ordinance, and in what this ordinance doth represent, is truly prepared for communion with Christ in this ordinance. O let us all labour for this in particular, if possible, that through the power of the Spirit of God we may have some impressions of the love of Christ on our hearts! Brethren, if we have not brought it with us, if we do not yet find it in us, I pray let us be careful to endeavour, that we do not go away without it. Thus you have what is to be observed in the institution itself, the authority and the love of Christ.

Secondly, I shall speak to the use and ends of this ordinance, and they are three: 1. Recognition; 2. Exhibition; 3. Profession.

1. Recognition, that is, the solemn calling over and remembrance of what is intended in this ordinance.

There is an habitual remembrance of Christ, what all believers ought continually to carry about them: and here lies the difference between those that are spiritual, and those that are carnal; they all agree that Christians ought to have a continual remembrance of Christ; but what way shall we

obtain it? Why, set up images and pictures of him in every corner of the house and chapel, that is to bring Christ to remembrance; that way carnal men take for this purpose. But the way believers have to bring Christ to remembrance is by the Spirit of Christ working through the word. We have no image of Christ but the word; and the Spirit represents Christ to us thereby, wherein he is evidently crucified before our eyes. But this recognition I speak of, is a solemn remembrance in the way of an ordinance, wherein unto the internal actings of our minds there is added the external representation of the signs that God has appointed, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' It is twice mentioned in ver. 24, 25.

Concerning this remembrance we may consider two things: (1.) What is the object of this remembrance, or recognition; and, (2.) What is the act of it. What we are to remember, and what is that act of remembrance that is acceptable to God in this ordinance.

(1.) What is the object of this remembrance. The object of this remembrance principally is Christ: but it is not Christ absolutely considered; it is Christ in those circumstances wherein he then was: 'Do it in remembrance of me,' saith he, as I am sent of God, designed to be a sacrifice for the sins of the elect, and as I am now going to die for that end and purpose; to do it so in remembrance of me. Wherefore there are these four things that we are to remember of Christ as proposed in those circumstances wherein he will be remembered. And I will be careful not to mention any thing but what the meanest of us may bring into present exercise at the ordinance.

[1.] Remember the grace and love of God, even the Father, in sending Christ, in setting him forth and proposing him to us. This is every where mentioned in Scripture. We are minded of this in Scripture whenever we are called to thoughts of the death of Christ. John iii. 16. 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.' Rom. iii. 25. 'God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' Rom. v. 8. 'God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' Remember, I pray you, the unspeakable grace and love of God in sending, giving, and setting forth Jesus Christ to be the propitiation.

Now how does this ordinance guide us in calling this love and grace of God to remembrance? Why in this, in that it is in the way of a furnished table provided for us. So God has expressed his love in this matter. Isa. xxv. 6. 'In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.' The preparation of the table here is to mind us to call to remembrance the love and grace of God, in sending and exhibiting his Son Jesus Christ to be a ransom and propitiation for us. That is the first thing.

[2.] Remember in particular the love of Jesus Christ, as God-man, in giving himself for us. This love is frequently proposed to us with what he did for us; and it is represented peculiarly in this ordinance. 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me,' says the apostle. Faith will never be able to live upon the last expression, 'gave himself for me,' unless it can rise up to the first, 'who loved me.' Rev. i. 5, 6. 'Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,' &c.

I think we are all satisfied in this, that in calling Christ to remembrance we should in an especial manner call the love of Christ to remembrance. And that soul in whom God shall work a sense of the love of Christ in any measure (for it is past comprehension, and our minds and souls are apt to lose themselves in it, when we attempt to fix our thoughts upon it), that he who is God-man should do thus for us, it is too great for any thing but faith, which can rest in that which it can no way comprehend, if it go to try the depth, and breadth, and length of it, to fathom its dimensions, and consider it with reason; for it is past all understanding; but faith can rest in what it cannot comprehend. So should we remember the love of Christ, of him who is God-man, who gave himself for us, and will be remembered in this ordinance.

[3.] We shall not manage our spirits aright as to this first part of the duty, the end of the ordinance in recognition, unless we call over and remember what was the ground upon which the profit and benefit of the sufferings of Christ doth redound to us.

Let us remember, that this is no other but that eternal covenant and compact that was between the Father and the Son, that Christ should undertake for sinners, and that what

he did in that undertaking should be done on their behalf, should be reckoned to them and accounted as theirs. So our Saviour speaks, Psal. xl. 6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine eyes hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me,' &c.

Christ does that in our behalf which sacrifice and burnt-offerings could not perform. We have this covenant declared at large, Isa. liii. 10, 11. 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' &c. Pray, brethren, be wise and understanding in this matter, and not children in calling over and remembering Christ in this ordinance. Remember the counsel of peace that was between them both, when it was agreed on the part of Christ to undertake and answer for what we had done; and upon the part of God the Father, that upon his so doing, righteousness, life, and salvation should be given to sinners.

[4.] Remember the sufferings of Christ. This is a main thing. Now the sufferings of Christ may be considered three ways: 1st. The sufferings in his soul. 2dly. The sufferings in his body. 3dly. The sufferings of his person in the dissolution of his human nature, soul and body, by death itself.

1st. Remember the sufferings in his soul: and they were of two sorts, (1st.) Privative; his sufferings in the desertion and dereliction of God his Father; and, (2dly.) Positive; in the emission of the sense of God's wrath, and the curse of the law on his soul.

(1st.) The head of Christ's sufferings was in the divine desertion, whence he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It is certain, Christ was forsaken of God; he had not else so complained; forsaken of God in his soul; how? the divine nature in the second Person did not forsake the human; nor did the divine nature in the third Person forsake the human, as to the whole work of sanctification and holiness, but kept alive in Christ all grace whatsoever, all grace in that fulness whereof he had ever been partaker. But the desertion was as to all influence of comfort and all evidence of love from God the Father, who is the fountain of love and comfort administered by the Holy Ghost. Hence

some of our divines have not spared to say, that Christ did despair in that great cry, 'My God, my God,' &c. Now despair signifies two things; A total want of the evidence of faith, as to acceptance with God; and a resolution in the soul to seek no farther after it, and not to wait for it from that fountain. In the first way Christ did despair; that is, penal only; in the latter, he did not, that is, sinful also. There was a total interception of all evidence of love from God, but not a ceasing in him to wait upon God for the manifestation of that love in his appointed time. Remember, Christ was thus forsaken that his people might never be forsaken.

(2dly.) There were sufferings positive in his soul when he was made sin and a curse for us, and had a sense of the wrath and anger of God on his soul. This brought those expressions concerning him, and from him; 'He began to be sore amazed, and said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even to death. He was in an agony.' I desire no more for my soul everlastingly to confute that blasphemy, that Christ died only as a martyr to confirm the truth he had preached, but the consideration of this one thing. For courage, resolution, and cheerfulness, are the principal virtues and graces in him who dies only as a martyr; but for him who had the weight of the wrath of God and the curse of the law upon his soul, it became him to be in an agony, to sweat great drops of blood, to cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' which, had he been called to for nothing else but barely to confirm the truth he had preached, he would have done without much trouble or shaking of mind.

I shall not now speak of the sufferings in his body, which I am afraid we do not consider enough. Some poor souls are apt to consider nothing but the sufferings of his body, and some do not enough consider them. We may call this over some other time, as also the sufferings of his person in the dissolution of his human nature, by a separation of the soul from the body, which was also comprised in the curse.

'Do this in remembrance of me.' What are we to remember? These are things of no great research; they are not hard and difficult, but such as we all may come up to the practice of in the administration of this very ordinance. Remember the unspeakable grace and love of God in setting

forth Christ to be a propitiation. Remember the love of Christ who gave himself for us, notwithstanding he knew all that would befall him on our account: remember the compact and agreement between the Father and the Son, that what was due to us he should undergo, and the benefit of what he did should redound to us: remember the greatness of the work he undertook for these ends; in the sufferings of his whole person, when he would redeem his church with his own blood.

(2.) One word for the act of remembrance, and I have done. How shall we remember? Remembrance in itself is a solemn calling over of what is true and past; and there are two things required in our remembrance; the first is faith; and the second is thankfulness.

[1.] Faith; so to call it over as to believe it. But who does not believe it? Why, truly, brethren, many believe the story of it, or the fact, who do not believe it to that advantage for themselves, as they ought to do. In a word, we are so to believe it, as to put our trust for life and salvation in these things that we call to remembrance. Trust and confidence belong to the essence of saving faith. So remember these things as to place your trust in them. Shall I gather up your workings of faith into one expression? the apostle calls it, Rom. v. 11. 'the receiving the atonement.' If God help us afresh to receive the atonement at this time, we have discharged our duty in this ordinance; for here is the atonement proposed from the love of God, and from the love of Christ by virtue of the compact between the Father and the Son, through the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ in his whole person, soul and body. Here is an atonement with God proposed unto us; the working of our faith is to receive it, or to believe it so as to approve of it as an excellent way, full of wisdom, goodness, holiness, to embrace it and trust in it.

[2.] Remember that among the offerings of old which were appointed to shadow out the death of Christ, there was a thank-offering; for there was a burning of the fat upon the altar of thank-offering, to signify there was thankfulness to God always as part of the remembrance of the sacrifice that Christ made for us. Receive the atonement, and be thankful.

The Lord lead us into the practice of these things.

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE last time I spake to you on this occasion, I told you that the grace of God, and our duty in this ordinance, might be drawn under the three heads of recognition, or calling over, of exhibition, and of profession. The first of these I then spake unto, and shewed you what we are to recognise or call over therein.

The second thing is, exhibition and reception; exhibition on the part of Christ, reception on our part, wherein the essence of this ordinance doth consist. I shall briefly explain it to you, rather now to stir up faith unto exercise, than to instruct in the doctrine. And that we may exercise our faith aright, we may consider,

1. Who it is that makes an exhibition, that offers, proposes, and gives something to us at this time in this ordinance.

2. What it is that is exhibited, proposed, and communicated in this ordinance. And,

3. How or in what manner we receive it.

1. Who is it that makes this exhibition? It is Christ himself. When Christ was given for us, God the Father gave him, and set him forth to be a propitiation; but in this exhibition it is Christ himself, I say, that is the immediate exhibitor. The tender that is made of, whatever it be, it is made by Christ. And, as our faith stands in need of directions and boundaries to be given to it in this holy duty, it will direct our faith to consider Jesus Christ present among us by his Spirit, and by his word, making this tender, or this exhibition unto us. It is Christ that does it, which calls out our faith unto an immediate exercise on his person.

2. What is it Christ does exhibit and propose to us? (1.) Not empty and outward signs. God never instituted such things in his church. From the foundation of the world he never designed to feed his people with such outward symbols. Those under the Old Testament were not empty, though they had not a fulness like those under the New: they had not a fulness, because they had respect to what was yet to come, and could not be filled with that

light, that grace, that evidence of the things themselves as the present signs are, which are accomplished. Christ doth not give us empty signs.

Nor, (2.) Does Christ give us his flesh and blood, taken in a carnal sense. If men would believe him, he has told us a long time ago, when that doubt arose upon that declaration of his eating his flesh and drinking his blood; John vi. 52. (though he did not then speak of the sacrament, but of that which was the essence and life of it) 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' He told us, that eating his flesh profited nothing in that way they thought of eating it; for they apprehended, as the Papists do now, that they were to eat flesh, body, bones and all. Why, says he, 'the flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit that quickens;' that power that is to be communicated to you is by the Spirit. So that Christ does not give us his flesh and blood in a carnal manner, as the men at Capernaum thought, and others look for. This would not feed our souls.

But then, what is it that Christ does exhibit, that we may exercise our faith upon? I say, it is himself as immediately discharging his great office of a priest, being sacrificed for us. It is himself as accompanied with all the benefits of that great part of his mediation in dying for us. May the Lord stir up our hearts to believe that the tender Christ makes unto us is originally and principally of himself, because all the benefits of his mediation arise from that fountain and spring, when God purchased the church with his own blood. A way this is which the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God, has found out and appointed to make a special tender of his person to our souls, to be received by us. And he tenders himself in the discharge of his mediation in the most amiable and most glorious representation of himself to the soul of a sinner. Christ is glorious in himself, in all his offices, and in all the representations that are made of him in the Scripture unto our faith; but Christ is most amiable, most beautiful, most glorious to the soul of a believing sinner, when he is represented as dying, making atonement for sin, making peace for sinners, as bearing our iniquities, satisfying the wrath of God, and curse of the law, to draw out our hearts unto faith and love. Christ in this ordinance makes such a representation of him-

self as bleeding for us, making atonement for our sins, and sealing the everlasting covenant: and he proposes himself unto us with all the benefits of his death, of that redemption he wrought out for us, peace with God, making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and the like. I intend only to remind you of these things, for we are at a loss sometimes as to the exercise of faith in and under this duty.

3. There remains to be considered, reception; for unless it be received, there is nothing done to any saving purpose. Notwithstanding all this tender that is made, the issue of all the benefit and consolation lies upon receiving.

There are two ways whereby we do receive Christ:

(1.) We receive him sacramentally, by obedience in church order. And, (2.) We receive him spiritually and really by faith, or believing in him.

(1.) We receive him sacramentally. This consists in the due and orderly performance of what he has appointed in his word for this end and purpose, that therein and thereby he may exhibit himself to our souls. It doth not consist (as some have thought) in partaking of the elements; that is but one part of it, and but one small part. Our sacramental reception consists in the due observation of the whole order of the institution according to the mind of Christ.

(2.) Spiritually, we receive him by faith: and if we could rightly understand that special act of faith which we are to exercise in the reception of Christ when he does thus exhibit himself to us, then should we glorify God, then should we bring in advantage to our own souls.

I have but a word to say, and that is this; it is that acting of faith which is now required of us which draws nearest unto spiritual, sensible experience. Faith has many degrees and many acts, some at a kind of distance from the object in mere reliance and recumbency; and many other acts of faith make very near approaches to the object, and rise up to sensible experience. It should be (if God would help us), such an act of faith as rises up nearest to a sensible experience. It is that which the Holy Ghost would teach us by this ordinance, when we receive it by eating and drinking, which are things of sense; and things of sense

are chosen to express faith wrought up to an experience. And they who had some apprehension hereof, that it must be a peculiar acting of faith and rising up to a spiritual experience, but finding nothing of the light and power of it in their own souls, gave birth to transubstantiation, that they might do that with their mouths and teeth which they could not do with their souls.

Faith should rise up to an experience in two things, [1.] In representation. [2.] In incorporation.

[1.] The thing we are to aim at, to be carried unto by faith in this ordinance is, that there may be a near and evident representation of Christ in his tender unto our souls; faith being satisfied in it; faith being in this matter the evidence of things not seen, making it exist in the soul, making Christ more present to the soul than he would be to our bodily eyes, if he was among us; more assuredly so. Faith should rise up to evidence in that near and close representation it makes of Christ in this exhibition of himself.

And, [2.] Faith is to answer the end of eating and drinking, which is incorporation. We are so to receive Christ, as to receive him into a spiritual incorporation, that the flesh and blood of Christ, as communicated in this ordinance through faith, may be turned and changed in our hearts into spiritual vital principles, and unto growth and satisfaction. These are the three things we receive by nourishment, and wherein incorporation does consist; there is an increase and quickening of vital principles, there is growth, and there is satisfaction in receiving suitable food and nourishment. Faith, I say, should rise up to these three things in its acts. I mention these things to direct the actings of our faith in this holy administration.

DISCOURSE XV.*

I SHALL offer a few words to direct you in the present exercise of faith in this ordinance. I design no more but to give occasion to that particular exercise of faith which is now required of us, whereby we may sanctify the name of God in a due manner, give glory to him by believing, and receive establishment unto our own souls: and I would do it by minding you of that word of our Lord Jesus Christ in

JOHN xii. 32.—*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

What he means by his lifting up, the evangelist expounds in the next words, which are these, 'This he spake, signifying what death he should die.' So that the lifting up of Christ on the cross, is that which he lays as the foundation of his drawing sinners unto him. No sinner will come near to Christ unless he be drawn; and to be drawn is to be made willing to come unto him, and to follow him in chains of love. Christ draws none to him, whether they will or no, but he casts on their minds, hearts, and wills, the cords of his grace and love, working in them powerfully, working on them kindly, to cause them to choose him, to come to him, and to follow him. 'Draw me, we will run after thee.' The great principle and fountain from whence the drawing efficacy and power of grace doth proceed is, from the lifting up of Christ. Drawing grace is manifested in, and drawing love proceeds from the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross.

But that which I would just mind you of at present is this, that the look of faith unto Christ as lifted up, is the only means of bringing our souls near to him. Our faith is often expressed by looking unto Christ; Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me,' says he, 'and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' The conclusion is, that those who so look unto him shall be justified and saved. Isa. lxv. 1. 'Behold me, be-

* Delivered September 5, 1675.

hold me.' And it is the great promise of the efficacy of the Spirit poured out upon us, that 'we shall look unto him whom we have pierced;' Zech. x. 12. God calls us to look off from all other things, look off from the law, look off from self, look off from sin, look only unto Christ. Is Christ said to be lifted up in his death; and to die that manner of death wherein he was lifted up on the cross? so it was expressed in the type; the brazen Serpent was lifted up on a pole, that those who were smote with the fiery serpents might look to it. If the soul can but turn an eye of faith unto Jesus Christ as thus lifted up, it will receive healing; though the sight of one be not so clear as the sight of another. All had not a like sharpness of sight that looked to the brazen serpent; nor have all the like vigour of faith to look to Christ; but one sincere look to Christ is pleasing to him, so as he says, Cant. iv. 9. 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes.' A soul sensible of guilt and sin, that casts but one look of faith to Christ as lifted up, it even raises the heart of Christ himself, and such a soul shall not go away unrefreshed, unrelieved.

Now, brethren, the end of this ordinance is to lift up Christ in representation: as he was lifted up really on the cross, and as in the whole preaching of the gospel, Christ is evidently crucified before our eyes, so more especially in the administration of this ordinance. Do we see then wherein the special acting of faith in this ordinance does consist? God forbid we should neglect the stirring up our hearts unto the particular acting of faith in Jesus Christ, who herein is lifted up before us. That which we are to endeavour in this ordinance is to get a view by faith, faith working by thoughts, by meditation, acting by love, a view of Christ as lifted up, that is, as bearing our iniquities in his own body on the tree. What did Christ do on the tree? what was he lifted up for, if it was not to bear our sins? Out of his love and zeal to the glory of God, and out of compassion to the souls of men, Christ bore the guilt and punishment of sin, and made expiation for it. O that God in this ordinance would give our souls a view of him! I shall give it to myself, and to you in charge at this time: if we have a view of Christ by faith as

lifted up, our hearts will be drawn nearer to him. If we find not our hearts in any manner drawn nearer to him, it is much to be feared we have not had a view of him as bearing our iniquities. Take therefore this one remembrance as to the acting of faith in the administration of this ordinance, labour to have it fixed upon Christ as bearing sin, making atonement for it, with his heart full of love to accomplish a cause in righteousness and truth.

DISCOURSE XVI.*

To whet our minds, and lead us to a particular exercise of faith and love in this duty, I shall add a few words from that Scripture which I have already spoken something to, upon this occasion, viz.

JOHN xii. 32.—*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

This lifting up, as I said before, was the lifting up of Christ on the cross, when as the apostle Peter tells us, 'he bore,' or as the word is, he carried up 'our sins in his own body on the tree.' Christ died for three ends: 1. To answer an institution; 2. To fulfil a type; and, 3. To be a moral representation of the work of God in his death.

1. It was to answer the institution, that he who was hanged on a tree was accursed of God; Deut. xxi. 23. There were many other ways appointed of God to put malefactors to death among the Jews; some were stoned; in some cases they were burned with fire; but it is only by God appointed that he that was hanged on a tree was accursed of God: and Christ died that death, to shew, that it was he who underwent the curse of God, as the apostle shews, Gal. iii. 13. 'He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.'

2. Christ died that death to fulfil a type. For it was a bloody and most painful death, yet it was a death wherein a

* Delivered October 31, 1675.

bone of him was not broken, typified of him in the paschal lamb, of which a bone was not to be broken. Christ was lifted up on the cross to fulfil that type, that though his death was bitter, lingering, painful, shameful, yet not a bone was broke; that every one might have a whole Christ, an entire Saviour, notwithstanding all his suffering and rending on our behalf.

3. He was so lifted up that it might be a moral representation unto all, to answer that other type also of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness; so that he was the person that might say, 'Behold me, behold me.' He was lifted up between heaven and earth, that all creatures might see God had set him forth to be a propitiation.

'And I, when I am lifted up,' what will he then do? When I have answered the curse, when I have fulfilled the types, when I have complied with the will of God in being a propitiation, 'I will draw all men to me.' It is placed upon Christ's lifting up; now that is actually past; nor was it done merely while Christ was hanging on the cross. There are two ways whereby there is a representation made of Christ being lifted up, to draw men unto him.

1. By the preaching of the word. So the apostle tells us, Gal. iii. 1. 'That Jesus Christ was evidently crucified before their eyes.' The great end of preaching the word is to represent evidently Christ crucified; it is to lift up Christ that he may draw sinners unto him. And, 2. It is represented in this ordinance of the Lord's Supper, wherein we shew forth his death. Christ is peculiarly and eminently lifted up in this ordinance, because it is a peculiar and eminent representation of his death.

Now there are two ways of Christ's drawing persons to himself,

1. His way of drawing sinners to him by faith and repentance.

2. His way of drawing believers to him, as to actual communion with him.

Christ draws sinners to him by faith and repentance, as he is lifted up in the preaching of the word; and he draws believers to him as unto actual communion, as by the word; so in an especial manner by this ordinance. I shall only speak a word on the latter, how Christ is lifted up in this

ordinance that represents his death unto us, or, how he draws us unto actual communion with him. 1. He does it by his love. The principal thing that is always to be considered in the lifting up of Christ is, his love. 'Who loved me,' says the apostle, 'and gave himself for me: and who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' I could shew you, that love is attractive, that it is encouraging and constraining. I will only leave this with you, whatever apprehensions God in this ordinance shall give you of the love of Christ, you have therein an experience of Christ's drawing you, as he is lifted up, unto actual communion with him. It is of great concernment to you. Christ is never so lovely unto the soul of a sinner as when he is considered as lifted up, that is, as undergoing the curse of God, that a blessing might come upon us. O that he who has loved us, and because he has loved us, would draw us with the cords of his loving-kindness, as God says he does; Jer. xxxi. 3. 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.'

2. The sufferings of Christ in soul and body are attractive of, and do draw the souls of believers to him. 'They shall look on me whom they have pierced and mourn.' It is a look to Christ as pierced for sin under his sufferings that is attractive to the souls of believers in this ordinance, because these sufferings were for us. Call to mind, brethren, some of these texts of Scripture; see what God will give you out of them. 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He was made a curse for us; and he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; and died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.' If Jesus Christ be pleased to let in a sense of his sufferings for us by these Scriptures upon our souls, then we have another experience of his drawing us, as he is lifted up.

3. Christ draws us as he is lifted up, by the effects of it. What was he lifted up for? it was to make peace with God through his blood. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' When? when 'he made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.' It is the sacrifice of atonement; it is the sacrifice wherewith the covenant between God and us was sealed. This is one notion of the supper of our Lord.

Covenants were confirmed with sacrifice. Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech, and confirmed it with sacrifice. So it was with Jacob and Laban; and in both places, when they had confirmed the covenant with a sacrifice, they had a feast upon the sacrifice. Christ by his sacrifice has ratified the covenant between God and us, and invites us in this ordinance to a participation of it. He draws us by it to faith in him as he has made an atonement by his sacrifice.

These are some of the ways whereby Christ draws the souls of believers unto communion with him in this ordinance, that represents him as lifted up, by expressing his love, by representing his sufferings, and tendering the sealing of the covenant as confirmed with a sacrifice, inviting us to feed on the remainder of the sacrifice that is left to us for the nourishment of our souls. O that he would cast some of these cords of love upon our souls! for if he should be lifted up, and we should not come, if we should find no cords of love cast upon us to draw us unto actual communion, we should have no advantage by this ordinance.

How shall we come in actual communion unto Christ in this ordinance upon his drawing? what is required of us? why, (1.) 'We are to come by faith to receive the atonement;' Rom. v. 11. We come to a due communion with Christ in this ordinance, if we come to receive the atonement made by his death, as full of divine wisdom, grace, and love, and as the truth and faithfulness of God is confirmed in it, to receive and lay hold on this atonement, that we may have peace with God. Isa. xxvii. 5. 'Let him take hold of my strength, and he shall be at peace with me.' Brethren, here is the arm of God, Christ the power of God, Christ lifted up. We ourselves have sinned and provoked God. What shall we do? shall we set briers and thorns in battle array against God? No, says he, I will pass through and devour such persons. What then? 'Let him take hold of my strength,' of my arm, 'and be at peace.' God speaks this to every soul of us in this lifting up of Christ.. Now receive the atonement as full of infinite wisdom, holiness, and truth.

(2.) Faith comes and brings the soul to Christ as he is thus lifted up, but it is always accompanied with love, whereby the soul adheres to Christ when it is come.

Doth faith bring us to Christ on his drawing, to receive the atonement? set love at work to cleave unto him, to take him into our hearts and souls, and to abide with him.

(3.) It is to come with mourning and godly sorrow, because of our own sins. 'Look unto him whom we have pierced and mourn.' These things are very consistent. Do not think we speak things at random: they are consistent in experience, that we should receive Christ as making an atonement, and have peace with God in the pardon of our sins, and nevertheless to mourn for our own iniquities. The Lord give experience of them in your hearts.

Let us now pray that some of these cords wherewith he draws the souls of believers, may be on our souls in this ordinance.

DISCOURSE XVII.

When we have opportunity of speaking to you on these occasions, it is for the direction of the exercise of your faith in this ordinance in a due manner. Here is a representation of the death of Christ; and there is in the word a representation of that which we should principally consider, and act faith with respect unto in the representation that is made in this ordinance, and that is of a blessed change and commutation that is made between Christ and believers, 'in the imputation of their sins unto him, and in the imputation of his righteousness unto them:' and the principal part of the life and exercise of faith, consists in a due consideration and improvement thereof. God taught this to the church of the Old Testament in the type of the offering of the scape-goat.

And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgression in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, &c.—Levit. xvi. 21.

Aaron was not only to confess all the sins and iniquities of the people over the head of the goat, but he was to put all their sins upon him. Here is a double act, the confession of sin, which is, as it were, the gathering of all their sins

together; and the putting of them on the goat, to give a lively representation of it unto faith. So God did instruct Aaron to the putting of the guilt of our iniquities typically upon the sacrifice, really upon Jesus Christ.

He doth not say, He shall bear the punishment, but he shall take the sin itself, that is, as to the guilt of it, and carry it quite away: and therefore in the sacrifice appointed in Deut. xxi. for expiation of an uncertain murder, when a man was killed, and none knew who killed him, so none was liable to punishment, but there was guilt upon the land; then the elders of the city that was nearest the place where the murder was committed, to take away the guilt, were to cut off the neck of a heifer by God's appointment, and that took away the guilt. Thus did God instruct the church under the Old Testament in this great sovereign act of his wisdom and righteousness, in transferring the guilt of sin from the church unto Christ. Therefore the prophet says, Isa. liii. 5, 6. 'The Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all.' What then? 'By his stripes we are healed.' The stripes were all due to us; but they were due to us for our iniquities, and for no other cause. Now our iniquities being transferred to Christ, all the stripes came to be his, and the healing came to be ours. To the same purpose the apostle says, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' As we are made the righteousness of God in him, so he is made sin for us. We are made the righteousness of God in him by the imputation of his righteousness unto us; for our apostle is to be believed, that righteousness is by imputation; God imputes righteousness, says he. We have no righteousness before God but by imputation; and when we are made righteous, the righteousness of God, which God ordains, approves, and accepts, it is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. And how is he made sin for us? because our sin is imputed to him. Some will say, He was made sin for us, that is, a sacrifice for sin: be it so; but nothing could be made an expiatory sacrifice, but it had first the sin imputed to it. Aaron shall put his hands on the goat, confessing all their sins over his head; be their sins on the head of the goat, or the expiatory sacrifice was nothing.

The same exchange you have again in Gal. iii. 13, 14.

'He was made a curse for us.' The curse was due to us, and this Christ was made for us: and to confirm our faith, God did institute a visible pledge long beforehand, to let us know he was made a curse for us; he had made it a sign of the curse for one to be hanged on a tree, as it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.' What then comes to us? Why, 'the blessing of faithful Abraham.' What is that? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Justification and acceptance with God is the blessing of faithful Abraham. Here is the great exchange represented to us in Scripture in these things, that all our sins are transferred upon Christ by imputation, and the righteousness of Christ transferred to us by imputation. Both these are acts of God, and not our acts. It is God who imputes our sin to Christ; 'he hath made him to be sin for us:' and it is God who imputes the righteousness of Christ to us; 'it is God that justifies.' He who made Christ to be sin, he also makes us to be righteousness. These acts of God we ought to go over with in our minds by faith, which is that I now call you to.

The way to apply the benefits and advantage of this great commutation to our souls, is in our minds by faith to seal to these acts of God. Christ in the gospel, and especially in this ordinance, is 'evidently crucified before our eyes;' Gal. iii. 1. God hath set him forth to be a propitiation; so he is declared in this ordinance; and Christ at the same time calls us to him, 'Come unto me: Look unto me all the ends of the earth.' Come with your burdens; come you that are heavy laden with the guilt of sin. What God has done in a way of righteous imputation, that we are to do in this ordinance in a way of believing. We are, by the divine help, to lay our sins by faith on Jesus Christ by closing with that act of God which is represented to us in the word, that God has imputed all our sins to Jesus Christ. Let you and I and all of us say Amen, by faith, so be it, O Lord. Let the guilt of all our sins be on the head of Jesus Christ; and therein admire the goodness, the grace, the love, the holiness, the infinite wisdom of God in this matter. If we were able to say Amen to this great truth, we should have the comfort of it in our souls, to acquiesce in it, to find power and reality in it.

Then the other act of God is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us. It is not enough to us, that our sins are all carried away into a land not inhabited; we stand in need of a righteousness whereby we may be accepted before God. He makes us to be the righteousness of God; we do not make ourselves so, but are made so by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

Our second act of faith that God may stir us up unto in this ordinance, is to 'receive the atonement.' So the apostle expresses it, Rom. v. 11. we receive together with it all the fruits of the atonement.

Now if the Lord will be pleased to stir up our hearts from under their deadness, to gather them in from their wanderings, to make us sensible of our concern, to give us the acting of faith in this matter, that truly and really the holy God has laid all our iniquities upon Christ, and tenders to us life, righteousness, justification, and mercy by him, we shall then have the fruit of this administration.

DISCOURSE XVIII.*

I SHALL offer a few words with a view to prepare our minds to the exercise of faith and communion with God in this ordinance: and because we ought to be in the highest exercise of faith in this ordinance, I shall take occasion from those words which express as high an acting of faith, I think, as any is in the Scripture; I mean those words of the apostle in

GAL. ii. 20.—*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Our inquiry now is, How we may act faith? It acts two ways:

1. By way of adherence, cleaving to, trusting and acquiescing in God in Christ, as declaring his love, grace, and good-will in his promises. This is the faith whereby we live, whereby we are justified; the faith without which this

* Delivered April 16, 1676.

ordinance will not profit, but disadvantage us; for without this faith we cannot discern the Lord's body, we cannot discern him as crucified for us: this is that we are in an especial manner to examine ourselves about in reference to a participation of this ordinance; for self-examination is a gospel institution proper for this ordinance. And this is the faith whereby we are in Christ, without which a participation of the outward signs and pledges of Christ will not avail us. So then, with faith thus acting, we are to be qualified and prepared unto a participation of this ordinance.

2. Another way by which faith ought to act in this ordinance, is that of special application. 'Who loved me and gave himself for me;' this is faith acting by particular application. I hope the Lord has given us that faith whereby we may be prepared for this ordinance. And now I am to inquire and direct you a little in that faith which you may act in this ordinance; I say, it is this faith of special application to our own souls that God now requires we should act; and I prove it thus, It is because in this ordinance there is a proposition, tender, and communication of Christ to every one in particular. In the promise of the gospel Christ is proposed indefinitely to all that believe; and so the faith I mentioned before, of acquiescence in him, answers what is required of us by virtue of the promise in the gospel; but in this ordinance by God's institution Christ is tendered and given to me and to thee, to every one in particular; for it is by his institution that the elements in this ordinance are distributed to every particular person, to shew that there is a tender and communication of Christ to particular persons. Now such a particular communication is to be received by this particular faith, the faith of application, to receive him to our own souls.

And then, moreover, one great end of the ordinance is manifestly, that it requires the acting of faith in a particular way of application to every one of us; it is for a farther incorporation of Christ in our souls; it is for receiving Christ as nourishment, as the bread that came down from heaven, as giving his body and blood for spiritual food. Now every one knows, that whatever feasts be prepared in the world, unless every one in particular takes his own portion, and eats and digests it, it will not turn to nourishment unto him.

This particular act of application answers that eating, drinking, and digesting, which the nature of the ordinance does require. So, brethren, this is that I aim at, that it is our duty in this ordinance to act a particular faith as to the application of Christ and all his benefits, each one to his own soul.

You will say then, What is the special object of this special faith? Truly that which the apostle tells us here, it is special love, in the first place; and it is the special design of the death of Christ, in the next place. 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' The object you ought to fix upon, in the exercise of this faith of application to your own souls, is the special love of Christ, that Christ had a special love, not only to the church in general; but the truth is, Christ had a special love for me in particular. It will be a very hard thing for you or me to rise up to an act of faith, that Christ hath a love for us in particular, unless we can answer this question, Why should Christ love you or me in particular? What answer can I give hereto, when I know he does not love all the world? I can give but this answer to it, Even because he would. I know nothing in me, or in any of you, that can deserve his love. Was there ever such a thing heard of, that Christ should have a particular love for such as we are? Would ever any person go and fix his love on a creature who was all over leprous? Is this the manner of man? Truly Christ would never have fixed his love upon any of our poor, defiled, leprous souls, but upon this one consideration, I know I can cleanse them, and I will. He loved us.

But what will he do with such deformed, polluted creatures as we are? Why, 'He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might wash and purify it, and present it to him a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Though we are altogether deformed and defiled, though no example, no instance can be given in things below, or among the creatures, of any fixing love on such as we are; yet Christ has done it out of sovereign grace, with this resolution, that he would cleanse us with his own blood to make us fit for himself.

O that God would help you and me to some firm unshaken acts of faith, that Jesus Christ did out of sovereign

grace love us in particular, and that in pursuit of this love he has washed us in his blood, to make us lovely and meet for himself! This is love to be adored and celebrated in time and to eternity.

This special love of Christ is not only to be considered by us in this special acting of faith, as free and undeserved, but it is to be considered as invincible, that would break through all oppositions, or whatever stood in the way, that nothing should hinder or turn him aside in his design of doing good to our souls. It is a glorious pitch that the spouse rises to in Cant. viii. 7. 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned;' speaking of her own love to Christ; nothing could quench, nothing could drown it, nothing could make a purchase of it from her, but her love was invincible, and would carry her through all difficulties. O how much more was the love of Christ! for our love being once fixed on Christ, meets with no difficulties of that nature that the love of Christ met withal when it was fixed on us. What did the love of Christ meet with when it was fixed on us? that we must take along with us, viz. 'the curse of the law,' was the first thing that presented itself to him: 'The soul that sins shall die. Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' That he was to make 'his soul an offering for sin,' was presented to him. We are to look on this love of Christ as sovereign and free, and with a design of making our souls lovely; so invincible also, that it broke up the eternal obstacles, that nothing could stand before it until it had accomplished his whole work and design. 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

I speak on this manner, and of these things, to encourage and direct the weakest and most unskilful in the mysteries of the gospel, to instruct them in the exercise of faith in this ordinance; and therefore, I say, that as this special faith (which I proved to you to be our duty in this ordinance) is to respect the love of Christ, so it is to respect more especially the peculiar acting of the love of Christ, whereby he gave himself for us. Gave himself! how is that? truly thus, brethren; the Lord help me to believe it, that I stood before

the judgment-seat of God, charged with my original apostacy from him, and with all the sins of my life multiplied above the hairs of my head, and being ready to perish, to have the sentence pronounced against me; then Christ came and stood in my place, putting the sinner aside, and undertaking to answer this matter; 'Let the poor sinner stand aside awhile; come, enter into rest, abide here in the cleft of the rock, I will undertake thy cause, and plead it out at God's judgment-seat.' In this undertaking, God spared him not: as if God should say, If you will stand in the place of the sinner, and undertake his cause, then it must go with you as with him; 'I will not spare.' 'Lo, I come,' says Christ, notwithstanding this, 'to do thy will, O God;' whatever thou dost require to make good this cause I have espoused, lo, I come to do it.

So Christ loved me, and gave himself for me. Everlasting rest and peace will dwell upon our souls, if the Lord will be pleased to help us to exercise faith on Christ's love in this ordinance, wherein all these things are represented to us.

DISCOURSE XIX.*

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.—GAL. ii. 20.

THE apostle in this place is expressing the vigour, and indeed the triumph, of the life of faith, 'Nevertherless I live.' To shew the excellency of that life, says he, 'yet not I, but Christ lives in me,' &c. That which I would to our purpose observe from these words is this, That the exercise of faith on the death of Christ ('who loved me, and gave himself for me') is the very life of faith. This is that we are now called to, to the exercise of faith on the death of Christ; and I cannot more recommend it to you than by this observation, to shew that the life of faith does greatly consist in this peculiar exercise of it upon the death of Christ. And that,

1. Because Christ in his death, as the ordinance of God for the salvation of believing sinners, is the proper and pe-

* Delivered June 11, 1676.

culiar object of faith, as it justifies and saves. Now when faith is in its exercise upon its direct, immediate, proper object, it is like a person that is feeding on his proper food, which gives refreshment, spirits, and strength; for faith and its object are in Scripture set out as an appetite and food; and especially it is so represented to us in this ordinance, where the spiritual food of our souls is conveyed to our faith under the symbol and representation of food to our bodies, which we eat and drink. Therefore, brethren, our faith is in its proper place, it is about its proper work, it is directing the soul to its special food, when it is exercised about the death of Christ, as the ordinance of God for the salvation of sinners.

2. As the death of Christ is thus the immediate and direct object of our faith, for 'God has set him forth as a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood,' which is the proper object of faith as it justifies, so the ultimate and supreme object of our faith is, the properties of God as manifested and glorified in the death of Christ; that you shall see how faith has its plain and full work in coming to this; 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.' The properties of God are God himself; the properties of God as manifested and glorified are God's name; and God himself and his name are the supreme and ultimate object of our faith and trust. All the inquiry then is, What special properties of the nature of God, God did design to manifest and glorify in the death of Christ, so as we should make them the special ultimate object of our faith, that which faith will find rest and satisfaction in, and wherein it will give glory to God? For the reason why God has made faith the alone instrument, and no other grace, of justification, and so of salvation, it is not because it is so fitted and suited to receive in us, as that it is the only grace whereby we give glory to God, and can do so.

Now let us see, that we may know how to exercise faith therein, what are those properties of the divine nature which God designs to manifest and glorify in the death of Christ, that our faith may stand in, and be fixed upon them. I find several things that God distinctly proposes of his divine excellency for our faith to fix upon in the death of Christ.

(1.) His righteousness. Rom. iii. 25. 'Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to

declare his righteousness.' I shall not now shew how, or wherein; but to me, this it is that manifests his righteousness in granting forgiveness of sin in the death of Christ, in that he caused all our iniquities to meet upon him. Remember, brethren, we are here to give God the glory he designed to himself, in sending Christ to die for us; and he tells us plainly what it was, and therefore it is expected of us, that we should give glory to him. Let us labour to be in the actual exercise of faith, whereby we may declare the righteousness of God in this thing.

(2.) God designed to glorify his love.

This is more particularly insisted on than any property of God in this matter. 'God so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son.' 'God commended his love unto us, that when we were sinners Christ died for us.' 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' There is no property of the nature of God which he doth so eminently design to glorify in the death of Christ as his love. That we may know that God is love; that the Father himself loves us, he has sent Jesus Christ out of his eternal love to save sinners; and if we have not due apprehensions of these things, it is not our appearing in this place that will give glory to God.

(3.) God does design to glorify his grace or pardoning mercy. Eph. i. 6. 'He has made us accepted in the beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace.' This God purposed, to make his grace in pardoning sinners very glorious by giving Christ to die for us.

(4.) God designed to glorify his wisdom. Eph. i. 8. 'He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.' Eph. iii. 10. There appeared 'the manifold wisdom of God.' 1 Cor. i. 24. 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.'

Now let us gather up these things. The special ultimate act of faith whereby we are justified, are those divine properties of God's nature which he designed to manifest in the death of Christ, his righteousness, his love, his grace, his wisdom.

The reason, therefore, why the life of faith does consist in its exercise on the death of Christ is, because the death of Christ is the immediate proper object of faith, as the ordi-

nance of God for the salvation of sinners; and because the glorious properties of the nature of God, which are manifested in the death of Christ, are the ultimate object of our faith, wherein we give glory to him, and find rest to our own souls.

Let us then be called on and be stirred up to this exercise of faith upon this present occasion. And to that end,

1. We might consider the deplorable condition of all our souls without this blessed provision and ordinance of God for our deliverance by the death of Christ. We had been in a deplorable condition, the wrath of God abiding on us, had not God made this a blessed way for our deliverance.

2. If you would be found acting faith in this matter, labour to come up to a firm, vigorous assent of your minds, not only that these things are true, but that this is the way wherein God will be glorified to eternity. The truth of it is, that person who is firmly satisfied and heartily pleased, that this way of the death of Christ for the salvation of sinners by the forgiveness of sin, is the way whereby God is and will be glorified, I say, that person is a true believer. Now let not your assent be only to this thing, That it is true, that Christ came into the world to save sinners; but to this, That this is the way whereby God is and will be glorified. He will be glorified in pardoning such guilty creatures as we are, in imputing righteousness to such sinners as we are. He is glorified in laying all our iniquities on Christ. By this way, his righteousness, his love, grace, and wisdom are all manifested; this is God's being glorified. If our souls come up to a free close with these things, that all these properties are manifested in this way, that is an act of faith, and may the Lord help us unto it.

3. Let us gather up our minds to this institution, whereby these things are represented to us. Here is represented the death of Christ, the immediate object of our faith, as God's ordinance. If the Lord help us to see it so represented to us, as that divine righteousness and wisdom, love and grace do all centre therein, and appear eminently to our souls, we shall have communion with God in this ordinance.

DISCOURSE XX.*

You have been minded of, and instructed in, the nature and benefit of our love to God; and I shall take occasion thence a little to mind you of the love of Christ unto us, the love in an especial manner which he shewed in dying for us, which is, that we are here gathered together to remember and celebrate, not barely the death of Christ, but that which is the life of that death, the love of Christ in his death. And I would ground it on that which the apostle speaks in

ROM. v. 5, 6.—*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.*

This is that which I know you all long for, and prize above life; 'the loving-kindness of God is better than life.' Why so? For, says he, 'when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.'

An apprehension of the love of Christ as dying for us ungodly creatures, is that which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Do not let your minds go upon uncertainties. When the Holy Ghost gives you a due apprehension of Christ's love in dying for ungodly sinners, as we are, then is this love shed abroad in our hearts. The apostle there proceeds to shew how great this love was in that Christ died; he died, not for good men, and righteous men, and for friends, but he died for the ungodly, for sinners, and for enemies. This was great love indeed. We are here to remember that love of Christ wherewith he gave himself to death for us, when we were enemies, and would have continued so to eternity, had he not loved us and given himself for us.

Brethren, if we barely remember the love of Christ in the way of an ordinance, and our hearts be not powerfully affected with it, we are in danger of being disadvantaged by our attendance. Pray remember it; you know how plainly I use to speak on these occasions; I say, we have frequent opportunities of remembering the love of Christ in dying

* Delivered September 3, 1676.

for us, in this ordinance representing of it; but if our hearts be not powerfully influenced and affected by it, we shall be losers by the frequency of ordinances.

I will add one word more; according as our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, so will be our love to Christ, and no otherwise. And truly, even that faith which discovers too much selfishness is very dangerous. If we come here to act faith, to look for no other effect of it, but what evidence and sense we have of the pardon of our own sins, how our consciences may be quieted and cleared, faith ends in self; it is dangerous, lest it should be only a branch from, and commensurate with, convictions. True faith acting itself on Christ in this ordinance will work by love unto Christ: I would not say, principally, or in the first place; I know poor creatures are apt to look after themselves, and their own relief; but it will so work also: and truly, brethren, this it will not do, we shall not have faith working by love towards him, unless we have some sense of the love of Christ on our hearts.

How shall we know, whether our hearts are under the powerful influence of the love of Christ in dying for us? Why, the love of Christ in dying for us has three properties with it, which will have an influence on our souls, if we are affected with it.

1. It has a transforming power, property, and efficacy with it. They are plain truths I am speaking, but of great concern to our souls, to know whether we are affected with the love of Christ or not. If we are rightly affected with it, I say, it will transform and change our whole souls in some measure into the likeness of Christ. How so? I will tell you in the most familiar manner I am able; if you are affected with the love of Christ, it lays hold upon, and possesses your affections; the affections being possessed, stir up many thoughts; thoughts are the very image of the soul, represent it, to shew you what the soul is: and those things concerning which your thoughts do most abound, that carries the frame of the soul. Let a man profess what he will, if his thoughts are generally conversant about earthly and worldly things, he has an earthly and worldly mind; and if thoughts are conversant about sensual things, he has a sensual and carnal mind; for whatever he may outwardly

say, as he thinks so is he; there is the image and likeness of the soul.

Now if we are affected with the love of Christ, it will beget in our souls many thoughts of Christ, in our lying down and in our rising up, in our beds, in our ways, on our occasions, as well as in ordinances. If indeed our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, our thoughts of Christ will abound; and those thoughts will work again on our affections, and conform our souls more and more unto the image of Jesus Christ. That man who thinks much of the earth, because affected with it, his soul is like the earth; and that man who thinks much on the love of Christ, because he is affected with it, his soul is like Christ.

If it has not been thus with us, brethren, in our preparation for this ordinance, or at any time, that thoughts of Christ have not abounded, verily there has been a failing in us. Let us strive for the future to amend it, that we may find the love of Christ begetting in us many thoughts of him, working upon our affections, and with a transforming power change the frame of our souls into his own likeness.

Again, 2. The love of Christ, if we are affected with it, has an attractive power: John xii. 23. 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' I cannot stay to shew you the drawing power and efficacy there is in the love of Christ when dying on the cross; but this I will say, it is that which converted the world of all that did believe. It was the love of Christ, set forth in his death as one crucified for them, that drew all men unto him. When I am lifted up, when I have accomplished, manifested, and evidenced the unspeakable love which I have for the sinful sons of men, in being lifted up for them, I will draw them unto me. If you have a true sense, brethren, of the love of Christ in dying for you, it will draw your souls unto him. Cant. i. 4. 'Draw me, we will run after thee.' I do not now speak to you about the first drawing of Christ, which is as unto believing; I hope Christ has so drawn all our souls; but the following efficacy of the love of Christ to draw souls that do believe nearer unto him. Whoever is sensible of this attractive power of the death of Christ, it will have this efficacy upon him, it will have adherence and delight; it will cause him more to cleave to Christ. The soul will cleave to Christ

with delight that is affected with the attractive drawing power of his loving-kindness in his death. There is a great deal in that word, Cleave unto Christ with love and delight, with the best of our affections and dearest of our valuations, to cleave to him with trust, and to him alone. I do but remind you of what you know, that you may reduce it into practice. Pray in this ordinance, labour to have such a sense of the drawing power of the love of Christ in his death, that you may resolve to cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, to cleave unto this Christ who has thus loved us.

3. Whenever we are affected with the love of Christ, it is accompanied with a constraining power: 2 Cor. v. 14. 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' and that constraint is unto obedience; it constrains us to judge that we ought to live to him who died for us. It is a blessed thing, brethren, to walk in our obedience under a sense of the constraining efficacy of the love of Christ. Take but this one word to discover to you, whether you walk in your obedience under a sense of the constraining power of Christ, it comprehends all others; 1 John v. 3. 'His commandments are not grievous.' When a soul works out of love, what it doth is not grievous. And the inward and outward commands of Christ will be grievous to all that are not under the constraining power and efficacy of his love.

I have no more to say but only to tell you, that we should labour to have our hearts affected with the love of Christ in this ordinance. I have shewed you the danger, if it be otherwise; and given you some ways to examine your hearts, whether they are so affected or not. The Lord grant that where they are, it may be increased; and where they are not, that God would renew it by his Spirit in us.

DISCOURSE XXI.*

We have had, through the providence of God, so good and so seasonable a word unto the present occasion, that there is no need, as well as but little time, to offer any thing farther unto you. Yet a few words in compliance with what we have heard, may not be altogether unseasonable, or unuseful.

Our business and duty is to set forth the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therein principally to call to mind his love. What you have heard may very well occasion us to think of that passage of the apostle, wherein he earnestly prays for them.

Eph. iii. 19.—*And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.*

This is a peculiar kind of expression; the meaning is, that we may know that experimentally which we cannot know comprehensively; that we may know that in its power and effects, which we cannot comprehend in its nature and depths. A weary person may receive refreshment from a spring, who cannot fathom the depths of the ocean from whence it doth proceed. And if we would have our hearts in this ordinance, and at other times, affected with the love of Christ, which is the thing we are to aim at (to know his love, and to experience the power of it), it is of great advantage to us to consider, that it is such a love as passes knowledge, that our faith concerning it must issue in admiration, not comprehension.

I shall name two or three things that may give a little sense of this love as it passes knowledge.

1. The love of Christ is the fountain and spring of all the glory that is in heaven, or shall be there unto all eternity. God's eternal glory is eternally the same; 'from everlasting to everlasting thou art God;' but all the created glory that is in heaven, or that ever shall be there, springs out of the love of Christ. It is true, the angels were not redeemed by him, but they were confirmed by him. They

* Delivered October 29, 1676.

were not recovered out of a lost estate by him, but they were continued in their first estate by him. Hence it is that God 'gathered all things in heaven and earth unto a head in him;' Eph. i. 10. And there is a great deal to the same purpose in that expression of the apostle, when he had mentioned principalities and powers, Col. i. 17. 'In him all things consist;' they have their consistence in him. All would dissolve and fall to nothing, if they had not their consistence in Jesus Christ. Certainly this is a love that passes knowledge, that is the fountain and spring of all the glory that is in heaven. If God help us by faith to look within the veil, and to take a view of all those glories wherewith the holy God is encompassed, we shall see that this love is the fountain and spring of them, the interposition of Christ saved the creation, and brought in that everlasting glory that shall dwell in heaven. God knows this love, God understands the way of it; but as to us it passes knowledge.

Again, 2. This love of Christ passes the comprehension and knowledge of angels; and therefore Peter tells us, 1 Epist. i. 12. speaking of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that followed, 'Which things,' says he, 'the angels desire to' bow down and 'look into.' The angels in heaven live in an admiration of the love of Christ unto sinners, that is, that love he expressed in suffering, and in the glory that did ensue. And O! what thoughts ought we to have of this love, who have all the benefits of it? The angels had no benefit by the sufferings of Christ, but their benefit and advantage ensued on the assumption of the human nature to bring the creation into a consistence, and his interposition between God and all his creatures. They admire and adore it. What ought such poor creatures as we are to do? It may well be said to pass our knowledge, for it passes the knowledge of all the angels in heaven.

3. It passes knowledge, in that the effects of it in Christ himself pass all our knowledge and comprehension.

To give but two instances: (1.) His condescension to assume our human nature passes all our comprehension. No man can fully understand the mystery of the assumption of our nature into the personal subsistence of the Son of God. Some dispute whether we shall understand the mystery of

the incarnation in heaven; here we believe it. It is love which passes knowledge that the eternal Son of God should take our nature into personal union with himself; it is that we may admire and ought to admire; and God help us, we are such poor earthly creatures that we cannot admire it as we ought; though it be much in our nature to admire what we cannot comprehend.

(2.) We cannot fully understand his passion and sufferings. God alone knows what is in the curse of the law; we do not know it. God alone knows what is the true desert of sin; it cannot be fully understood by any but himself. They who undergo it must suffer to eternity; there is no end; they never see, never knew what sin deserved. How do we know then what Christ suffered, when the punishment due to our sin, when all our iniquities met upon him, with the curse of the law? God only knows what is in these things; the fruits and effects of this love in himself, in his incarnation and passion, are past our knowledge, therefore the love itself surpasses our knowledge.

4. Give me leave to say, The very fruits of it in ourselves do pass knowledge. No man that lives knows what there is in these three general heads of the fruits of Christ's love, in justification and pardon of sin, in the renovation and sanctification of our natures, and in the inhabitation and consolations of the Holy Spirit. No man living can find out these things to perfection. None of us fully understands and comprehends what it is to be justified in the sight of God, to have sin pardoned, to have our natures renewed, and transformed into the likeness of God, and to have the Holy Ghost dwell in us. The love of Christ therefore passes all knowledge, for the very fruits of it in ourselves are beyond what we can comprehend; there is a greatness in them we cannot reach unto. Why then, my brethren, let us labour to have our hearts affected with this love. If God would be pleased to give unto every one of us some sense and impression of the greatness of this love of Christ, glance it into our hearts, beam it upon us in this ordinance, we should have cause to bless him all the days of our lives. The faith and light of it issue in admiration; the light of glory will bring us to comprehension. Let us have such a sense as may cause us to admire what we cannot now comprehend.

(1.) I could speak something, but I will not now, to the actings of faith in admiration; it being the proper nature of faith to issue itself in the admiration of that which is infinite. If we can get our souls up to a holy admiration of this love, we have some gracious sense of it upon our hearts, if we can go no farther.

(2.) Let us learn to run up all the mercies we are partakers of, whatsoever it be we value, to the proper spring, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.' If we have any relief, or supply, or refreshment of soul, in a sense of pardon of sin, in spiritual light or consolation, pray let us exercise ourselves to run up all these things to the fountain: it is all from the love of Christ, that unspeakable love which passes knowledge.

(3.) In this let us be ashamed, seeing the love of Christ to us is such as passes our knowledge, our love to him is so weak, that sometimes we know not whether we have any or not. For this let us be greatly humbled. This is not the way to answer that love which passes knowledge, to know not whether we love Christ again or not. Let us be ashamed for our want of love.

[illegible]d lastly, Let us abound in praise and thanksgiving for hi[illegible]s, and all the fruits of it.

For my part I do not know, whether that vision in Rev. v. 9. does express the rejoicing of the church above, or the duty of the church below; but both I am sure are of so near affinity, that apply it to which you will, you do not miss it. And what do they there? why, it is said, 'They sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals of it; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests,' &c. And it is said again, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;' and again he repeats it in ver. 13. I say, I know not whether this be a representation of the rejoicing of the church above, or a representation of the duty of the church below; but I can conclude from it, that the enjoyment of the one and the duty of the other, consists greatly in continual giving praise and thanksgiving to Christ for his unspeakable love in our redemption.

DISCOURSE XXII.*

We are met here to remember the death of Christ in the way and by the means that he himself hath appointed, and in remembering the death of Christ we are principally to remember the love of Christ; 'who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood;' and that which on our part is required herein is faith in Christ who died for us, and love to Christ who loved us so as to give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us.

1. That which I would now observe is this (to make way for the stirring up of our love), That the person of Christ is the adequate complete object of the love of God, and of the whole creation that bears the image of God, I mean, the church of God above, the angels and saints; and the church of God below in believers, which are the creation that has the image of God upon it.

The person of Christ is the first complete object of the love of God the Father. A great part (if I may so speak, and I must so speak) of the essential blessedness of the holy Trinity consists in the mutual love of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost, which is the love of them both.

That which I would now take notice of, I say, as the foundation of all, is this, that the divine nature in the person of the Son, is the only full, resting, complete object of the love of God the Father. I will give you a place or two of Scripture for it, and so go on to another instance, Prov. viii. 30. 'Then,' saith he, that is from everlasting, 'was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him,' that is, as the special object of his love; as among you men, one that is brought up with you, as your child is. The delight of the Father from all eternity was in the Son. The ineffable love and mutual delight of the Father and the Son by the Spirit, is that which is the least notion we have of the blessedness of the eternal God. John i. 18. 'The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father.' Pray observe it, that I speak yet only of the divine person of Christ antecedent unto his incarnation, and the ineffable mutual love of the blessed persons in

* Delivered February 18, 1676.

the holy Trinity, which Jesus Christ wonderfully sets out in John xvii. There is his relation unto God, he is 'the only begotten Son,' by eternal generation; what follows? 'he is in the bosom of the Father,' is in the Father's eternal infinite love. Herein is God's love; and every thing else of love is but a free act of the will of God, a free emanation from this eternal love between the Father and the Son. God never did any thing without himself, but the end of it was to manifest what is in himself. The old and new creation that God hath wrought was to manifest what was in himself. God made this world to manifest his power and wisdom; God made the new world by Jesus Christ to manifest his grace, his love, goodness, &c.

The sole reason why there is such a thing as love in the world, among the creatures, angels, or men, that God ever implanted it in the nature of rational creatures, it was, that it might shadow and represent the ineffable eternal love that the Father had unto the Son, and the Son unto the Father by the Spirit.

Contemplative men of old did always admire love, wherein they would have the life, lustre, and glory of all things to consist; but they could never see the rise of it: and they trifled some things to this, that God necessarily loved himself; and it is true, it cannot otherwise be; but God's loving of himself, absolutely as God, is nothing but his eternal blessed acquiescence in the holy, self-sufficing properties of his nature. This they had some reach after; but of this eternal ineffable love 'of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father by the Spirit,' that they had no conjecture of. Yet this is the fountain and spring-head; and all such things as love in the old and new creation, as I said, is but to resemble and shadow out this great prototype of divine love. I acknowledge there is little discerned of these things, by reason of the weakness of our understandings; but the Scripture having so directly declared to us the mutual love of the Father and the Son (which truly is of such singular use, that I would fix persons upon it in conceiving of the doctrine of the Trinity), that it is matter of admiration and thankfulness to us. Here lies the foundation of all love, whereunto we hope to reduce our love unto Christ, viz. in the unchangeable love of the Father to the Son.

2. The person of Christ as vested with our nature, and undertaking the work of mediation, is the first object of the Father's love, wherein there is any mixture of any thing without himself.

The first love of God the Father to the Son is that which we call 'ad intra,' where the divine persons are objects of one another's actings; the Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father; the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father; and so consequently of the Holy Ghost, the medium of all these actings.

But now, I say, the first act of the love of God the Father, wherein there is any thing 'ad extra,' or without the divine essence, is the person of Christ, considered as invested with our nature. And had not the love of God been fixed in the first place in all things upon the person of Christ, there would have been no redundancy to us, nor communication of love unto us. From the first eternal love of God proceeds all love that was in the first creation; and from this second love of God to the person of Christ, as incarnate, proceeds all the love in the second creation. See how God expresses it in a prospect of what he should be, Isa. xlii. 1. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.' And this is singular in the whole Scripture, that God spake the same words twice from heaven immediately, and they were these, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' at his baptism, Matt. iii. 17. and at his entrance on his sufferings, Matt. xvii. 5. which was the voice which came from the excellent glory. I would observe this unto you, because I think it is what God would have us take notice of, the emphasis in the words, 'Behold my servant, mine elect, my Son, my beloved Son!' what of him? 'In whom I rest, in whom I am well-pleased and delighted.' All of them emphatical words. Saith God, let the sons of men (I speak it from heaven again and again) take notice of this, that the infinite love of my whole soul is fixed on the person of Jesus Christ, as incarnate. And you will find the Lord Jesus Christ pleading this as the ground of that trust committed unto him, and all that he received, John iii. 35. 'The Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into his hands.' John v. 20. 'The Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that himself doeth, and will

shew him greater works than these.' He lays the foundation of all the trust that God the Father committed unto him, in the peculiar love of the Father to him, as the Son incarnate.

Truly I shall not go beyond this foundation to manifest to you, that the person of Christ is the complete, adequate object of the love of the Father. The great satisfaction of the soul of God wherein he rests and delights, consists in love to Christ as incarnate.

I will make but this one inference from it; proportionable to the renovation of the image and likeness of God upon any of our souls, is our love to Jesus Christ. He that knows Jesus Christ most is most like unto God, for there the soul of God rests, there is the complacency of God; and if we would be like to God, have pledges in ourselves of the renovation of this image upon us, it must be in the gracious exercise of our love to the person of Jesus Christ. And pray let me observe it to you, the world, that is full of enmity to God, doth not exercise its enmity against God immediately under the first notion of God, but exerciseth its enmity against God in Christ: and if we return to God by the renovation of his image, we do not exercise our love to God immediately as God, but our love to God by and in Christ; that ye through him might believe in God. Here is a trial, brethren, of our return to God, and of the renovation of his image in us, viz. in our love to Jesus Christ. There God and man do meet, there God and his church above and below centre. The Lord grant that this ordinance may be the means to stir up our hearts more to the exercise of this grace!

DISCOURSE XXIII.*

I SHALL speak to them who have a mind to be found performing their duty; but it may be, it doth not occur to them what is particularly required of them. They are such as are least acquainted with this mystery that I would have most respect unto, that nothing of God's provision in his house

* Delivered July 8, 1677.

may be lost to his children for want of understanding aright to come to his table, where he makes this provision.

I pray you, brethren, exercise your thoughts unto the institution of this ordinance, wherein you exercise your obedience; unto the proposition of Christ in this ordinance, wherein consists the peculiar acting of your faith; and unto the exhibition of Christ in this ordinance, which is the ground of your thankfulness.

What shall I do that I may please God now, please Jesus Christ, and benefit my own soul in the administration of this ordinance?

Why, 1. Consider the institution of it, wherein we have the authority of Jesus Christ put forth, and acting towards our souls. 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Labour therefore to bring your hearts into an actual obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ in what we are about. This the Lord Jesus doth require at our hands. We do not come here in a customary manner to satisfy our convictions, because we ought to come; we do not come here merely to make use of our privilege, but our hearts are to bow to the authority of Jesus Christ. Consider, I pray you, the institution of this ordinance, and labour to bring your souls into actual obedience to Jesus Christ. We do it because Christ hath required it of us. If our hearts are in that frame, that we are here upon the command of Christ, to do what he has appointed, and we can recommend our consciences unto him; that it is in obedience to his command that we are here, then our obedience is in exercise.

2. Consider the proposition that is made of Jesus Christ in this ordinance to us, that our faith may be in its proper exercise.

The Lord take off our hearts from the consideration of the outward signs merely. Christ in his love, Christ in his bloodshed, agony, and prayer, Christ in his death is here proposed before us. 'Ye shew forth the Lord's death.' Who proposes it? He that hath appointed these things proposes it. And there is the engagement of the faithfulness of God and Christ in this proposition and tender that is made of Jesus Christ; and it is a peculiar way, and as I could prove, full of love, that God hath found out a way to propound Christ as dying, and crucified, to all our souls.

Therefore stir up your hearts to this. To every one of you there is by the grace and faithfulness of God a proposal of Jesus Christ in his death, and all the benefits of it, unto your souls. The whole question is, Whether you will stir up your hearts to a new and fresh receiving of Jesus Christ who is thus proposed and tendered unto you, evidently crucified before your eyes, offered to you by the love and faithfulness of God? But if we do not endeavour every one of us in the participation of this ordinance a fresh acceptance of Jesus Christ, we do what we can to make God a liar, as though he was not tendered unto us. The especial exercise of your faith in this ordinance is upon the love, grace, and faithfulness of God, proposing and tendering of Christ unto you, the death of Christ, and the benefits of Christ in this way which he has chosen; submit unto it, and embrace it.

3. As your obedience is required with respect to the institution (we give this account before God, angels, and men, that we are here in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ); and as faith is required with respect to the proposition of Christ, whereby he is evidently proposed and tendered by God unto us; so in this ordinance, to them that believe there is an exhibition of Christ, Christ is really exhibited and communicated to the souls of men who exercise faith upon him in this ordinance; really exhibited with all the benefits of his death. And want of receiving by faith in particular Christ as exhibited and communicated in this ordinance is the great ground of our want of profiting by it, and thriving under it; of our want of receiving strength, joy, and life by it; because we do not exercise ourselves to the receiving of Christ as he is exhibited, as God doth really give him out, and communicate him to them that do believe.

That there is such an exhibition of Christ appears, (1.) By the sacramental relation there is between the outward elements and the thing signified. 'This is my body,' says Christ; this bread is so; and 'this is my blood.' It is the body of Christ and the blood of Christ, that we are invited to the participation of. If there was no more in this ordinance exhibited, but only the outward elements, and not by virtue of sacramental relation upon God's institution, the body and blood of Christ, his life and death and merits exhibited unto us, we should come to the Lord's table like

men in a dream, eating and drinking, and be quite empty when we have done, for this bread and wine will not satisfy our souls.

2. As it is plain from the sign and the thing signified, that there is a grant, or a real communication of Jesus Christ unto the souls of them that do believe, so it is evident from the nature of the exercise of faith in this ordinance; it is by eating and drinking. Can you eat and drink unless something be really communicated? You are called to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man; unless really communicated we cannot eat it nor drink it. We may have other apprehensions of these things, but our faith cannot be exercised in eating and drinking, which is a receiving of what is really exhibited and communicated. As truly, my brethren, as we do eat of this bread and drink of this cup, which is really communicated to us, so every true believer doth receive Christ, his body and blood, in all the benefits of it, that are really exhibited by God unto the soul in this ordinance: and it is a means of communicating to faith.

We come to receive a crucified Christ, come to be made partakers of the body and blood of the Lord, to have the Lord Jesus really united to our hearts more and more. The Lord open our hearts to embrace the tender, receive the exhibition, take in Jesus Christ as food, that he may be incorporated in our hearts by faith, that he may dwell in us plentifully, more and more; that we may go away refreshed by this heavenly food, this glorious feast of fat things which the Lord has made in his mount for his people. The whole of our comfort depends on our particular receiving of Christ by faith, and carrying him away by believing.

DISCOURSE XXIV.*

We are met together again by the patience and kindness of God for the celebration of this great ordinance, and therein to shew forth the death of the Lord.

I have often spoken to you on this occasion concerning the nature of this ordinance, the expression of the love of

* Delivered September 30, 1677.

God, and Christ that is in it, and the especial acts of faith and love that are required of us in this ordinance.

I have one word now somewhat of another nature, but yet such as I judge not unseasonable; and it is to this purpose, that we, who so frequently enjoy the privilege of the representation of the death of Christ unto us, ought to be very diligent in inquiring after an experience of the power of the death of Christ in us. Without this our privilege will not be to our advantage.

The power and efficacy of the death of Christ, which we now remember in a peculiar manner, is twofold.

1. Towards God, as the consummation of the sacrifice of atonement. This we have often spoke to.

2. Towards our own souls; towards the church, and that is to be an example, a precedent, a pattern of what is to be wrought in us. In this sense the power of the death of Christ is its efficacy to conformity with Christ in his death. It is to be 'crucified with Christ,' as the apostle speaks, Gal. ii. 20. Power comes forth from the death of Christ, if received by faith in a due manner, to render us conformable to him in the death of sin in us. The apostle has a great and glorious word concerning himself, 2 Cor. iv. 10. 'Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.' I acknowledge the words are usually applied to the representation of the sufferings of Christ in the sufferings of the ministers of the gospel, concerning which the apostle there discourses; but the antithesis in the following words, 'that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our body,' does certainly lead to a larger sense. Then, brethren, we may have an experience of the power of Christ in us, when we can say, we always carry about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, to carry it in our meditation, to carry it in our conversation, to carry it in our constant universal endeavours for conformity to it; and without this we have not experience of the power of his death in us, and it will not avail us to have the nature of his death represented to us.

1. We are always to carry about the dying of Jesus Christ, in our thoughts and meditations. O that our thoughts were much fixed upon it! I verily believe that the life of faith doth answer in proportion to our thoughts about the dying of Jesus. The dying of Jesus comprisetb the love from

whence he died, the death itself he died, and the end for which he died. Let us carry about us always thoughts hereof, for his sake who loved us and who died for us. Meditate more on these things.

2. In our conversation. It is not a time to reflect upon any, unless I did it upon myself. But truly, brethren, I am afraid we do not carry about and manifest to all the dying of the Lord Jesus in our conversation; to perform all things, so as it may appear and be made manifest to ourselves and others, that our hearts are set upon his dying love, that we have not such quick, such active, and vigorous affections to the world, and the things of the world, nor that fury of diligence after them and in them, as other men have, and we have had; we cannot do it; the dying of the Lord Jesus crucifies our hearts. These are hard words I know; how far from our practice! But if we live not in an endeavour after it, in all things to manifest that our hearts are full of the dying of the Lord Jesus, we have not experience of the power of it in our souls. These things depend on one another. If we dwelt more upon this subject in our meditations, we should manifest it, and carry it about and represent it more in our conversation.

3. Carry it about in a constant endeavour for conformity to Jesus Christ in all things in his death. Did Christ die, and shall sin live? Was he crucified in the world, and shall we have quick and lively affections to the world? O where is the temper and spirit of that apostle who by 'the cross of Christ was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him?' If there be any among us that should be indulgent to the life of any one lust or corruption, that soul can have no experience of the power of the death of Christ in himself, cannot carry about him the dying of Christ. Endeavour to destroy sin that we may be like unto Christ.

I will not make particular application of these things to all the concerns of our walk, but leave it with you, with this word, begging of you, and my own heart, and of God for us all, that having these blessed representations of the death of Christ to us, we may have no rest in our spirits but when we have experience of the power of the death of Christ in us.

DISCOURSE XXV.*

It is a common received notion among Christians, and it is true, that there is a peculiar communion with Christ in this ordinance, which we have in no other ordinance; that there is a peculiar acting of faith in this ordinance which is in no other ordinance. This is the faith of the whole church of Christ, and has been so in all ages. This is the greatest mystery of all the practicals of our Christian religion, a way of receiving Christ by eating and drinking, something peculiar that is not in prayer, that is not in the hearing of the word, nor in any other part of divine worship whatsoever; a peculiar participation of Christ, a peculiar acting of faith towardsChrist. This participation of Christ is not carnal, but spiritual. In the beginning of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he began to instruct them in the communication of himself, and the benefit of his mediation to believers, because it was a new thing, he expresses it by eating his flesh and drinking his blood; John vi. 53. 'Unless ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you.' This offended and amazed them. They thought he taught them to eat his natural flesh and blood. 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' They thought he instructed them to be cannibals. Whereupon he gives that everlasting rule for the guidance of the church, which the church forsook, and thereby ruined itself; saith he, 'It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak, they are spirit and they are life.' It is a spiritual communication, saith he, of myself unto you; but it is as intimate, and gives as real an incorporation, as if you did eat my flesh and drink my blood. The church forsaking this rule of a spiritual interpretation, ruined itself, and set up a monster, instead of this blessed mysterious ordinance.

We may inquire therefore how faith doth peculiarly act itself towards Christ in this ordinance, whereby we have a distinct participation of Christ otherwise than we have by

* Delivered September 20, 1682.

and in any other ordinance whatsoever. And I would mention four things unto you, which you may make use of.

1. That faith hath a peculiar respect to the sole authority of Christ in the institution of this ordinance.

All other ordinances draw upon the light of nature, and upon the moral law, as prayer, preaching the word, and singing of psalms to the praise of God; but this, that we should receive Jesus by eating of bread, and drinking of wine, it has no respect to the light of nature, or the moral law at all; and we should as soon choose to honour God by sacrifices, and eating the flesh of them, if it were not for the authority of Jesus Christ. Herein doth faith give honour to Christ in his kingly office. This is the most direct profession of the subjection of our souls and consciences to the authority of Christ, in all our religion. We can give no other reason, we can take no allusion from things, but merely this, Christ would have it so.

2. Faith hath a peculiar respect to the love of Christ in dying for us, making the atonement for us by his blood, and therein the glorifying of the wisdom, love, and grace of God the Father. Faith is led into special communion with Christ as dying for us to make the atonement, and therein we give glory to Christ in his priestly office in a peculiar manner in this ordinance, it respecting the sacrifice of Christ, whereby he made atonement for us.

3. Faith hath respect to this special manner of the exhibition of Christ to the souls of believers, under the outward signs and symbols of bread and wine by his institution, making such a sacramental union between the thing signified and the sign, that the signs remaining to be what they are in themselves, they are unto us the thing that is signified by virtue of the sacramental union that Christ hath appointed between his body and blood, and the benefits of it; and this bread and wine, though not changed at all in themselves, yet they become to us by faith, not what they are in themselves, but what is signified by them, the body and blood of Christ. Herein we give glory to Christ in his prophetical office. It is he who has revealed, taught and instructed his church in this truth which depends on the sacramental union which follows by his institution. That

is the third thing wherein faith peculiarly acts itself in this ordinance.

4. The fourth thing is, the mysteriousness, which I leave to your experience, for it is beyond expression, the mysterious reception of Christ in this peculiar way of exhibition. There is a reception of Christ as tendered in the promise of the gospel, but here is a peculiar way of his exhibition under outward signs, and a mysterious reception of him in them really, so as to come to a real substantial incorporation in our souls. This is that which believers ought to labour after an experience of in themselves; to find that indeed under these four considerations, they submit to the authority of Jesus Christ in a peculiar manner, giving him the glory of his kingly office; mixing faith with him as dying and making atonement by his blood, so giving him the glory and honour of his priestly office; much considering the sacramental union that is by his institution between the outward signs and the thing signified, thus glorifying him in his prophetical office; and raising up their souls to a mysterious reception and incorporation of him, receiving him to dwell in them, warming, cherishing, comforting, and strengthening their hearts.

I have mentioned these things as those which lie in your practice, and to obviate that (if I may mention it), which you may be tried with. There is but one plausible pretence that our adversaries, who design to oppress us, have in this business: If, say they, there be not a real presence and a real substantial transmutation of the elements into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, shew you a way whereby you may have a peculiar communion with Christ any more than in the word preached. We say, we have in these things experience of a peculiar communion with Christ in a way made proper to this ordinance, which is not to be found in any other ordinance.

THE

NATURE OF APOSTACY

FROM THE PROFESSION OF THE GOSPEL,

AND

THE PUNISHMENT OF APOSTATES DECLARED,

IN AN

EXPOSITION OF HEB. VI. 4—6.

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES AND REASONS OF
THE DECAY OF THE POWER OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD; OR THE
PRESENT GENERAL DEFECTION FROM
THE TRUTH, HOLINESS, AND WORSHIP OF THE GOSPEL.

ALSO,

OF THE PRONENESS OF CHURCHES AND PERSONS
OF ALL SORTS UNTO APOSTACY;

WITH

REMEDIES AND MEANS OF PREVENTION.

Search the Scriptures.—JOHN v. 39.

TO THE READER.

SOME brief account of the occasion and design of the ensuing discourse I judge due unto the reader, that upon a prospect of them, he may either proceed in its perusal, or desist, as he shall see cause.

That the state of religion is at this day deplorable in most parts of the Christian world, is acknowledged by all who concern themselves in any thing that is so called. Yea, the enormities of some are come to that excess that others publicly complain of them, who, without the countenance of their more bold provocations, would themselves be judged no small part or cause of the evils to be complained of. However, this on all hands will, as I suppose, be agreed unto, that among the generality of professed Christians, the glory and power of Christianity are faded and almost utterly lost; though the reasons and causes thereof are not agreed upon. For however some few may please themselves, in supposing nothing to be wanting unto a good state of things in religion, but only security in what they are and enjoy, yet the whole world is so evidently filled with the dreadful effects of the lusts of men, and sad tokens of divine displeasure, that all things from above and here below proclaim the degeneracy of our religion, in its profession, from its pristine beauty and glory. Religion is the same that ever it was, only it suffers by them that make profession of it. Whatever disadvantage it falls under in the world, they must at length answer for, in whose misbelief and practice it is corrupted. And no man can express a greater enmity unto, or malice against, the

gospel, than he that should assert or maintain, that the faith, profession, lives, ways, and walkings of the generality of Christians are a just representation of its truth and holiness. The description which the apostle gives of men in their principles, dispositions, and actings, before there hath been any effectual influences on their minds and lives from the light, power, and grace of the gospel, is much more applicable unto them, than any thing that is spoken of the disciples of Christ in the whole book of God. 'Foolish are they, and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.' The ways, paths, and footsteps of gospel faith, love, meekness, temperance, self-denial, benignity, humility, zeal, and contempt of the world, in the honours, profits, and pleasures of it, with readiness for the cross, are all overgrown, and almost worn out amongst men, that they can hardly be discerned where they have been. But in their stead the works of the flesh have made a broad and open road that the multitude travel in; which though it may be right for a season in their own eyes, yet is it the way to hell, and goeth down to the chambers of death. For these 'works of the flesh are manifest' in the world, not only in their nature what they are, but in their open perpetration and dismal effects; such are 'adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like,' as they are reckoned up by the apostle. How these things have spread themselves over the face of the Christian world among all sorts of persons, is manifest beyond all contradiction or pretence to the contrary. And that so it should come to pass in the latter times is both expressly and frequently foretold in the Scripture, as in the ensuing discourse will be more fully declared.

Many indeed there are who are not given up in the course of their lives unto the open practice of such abominations; and therefore, in that grand defection from the truth and holiness of the gospel which is so prevalent in the world, the grace of God is greatly to be admired, even in the small remainders of piety, sobriety, and modesty, and common usefulness that are yet left among us. But those openly flagitious courses are not the only way whereby men may fall off from, and even renounce the power, grace, and wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For even of those who will not run out into the same excess of riot with other men, the most are so ignorant of the mysteries of the gospel, so negligent or formal in divine worship, so infected with pride, vanity, and love of the world, so regardless of the glory of Christ, and honour of the gospel, that it is no easy thing to find Christian religion in the midst of professed Christians, or the power of godliness among them who openly avow the form thereof.

By this means is Christianity brought into so great neglect in the world, that its great and subtle adversary seems encouraged to attempt the ruining of its very foundations, that the name of it should no more be had in remembrance. For wherever religion is taken off from a solid consistency by its power in the lives and minds of men, when it hath no other tenure but an outward unenlivened profession, and the secular interest of its professors, it will not long abide the shock of that opposition which it is continually exposed unto. And whilst things are in this state, those who seem to have any concernment therein, are so engaged in mutual charging one another with being occasions thereof, mostly on such principles of difference in judgment as have no considerable influence thereinto,

as that a joint endeavour after proper remedies is utterly neglected.

And there is yet another consideration rendering the present state of Christian religion in the world yet more deplorable. The only principle of evangelical obedience is sacred truth, and our faith therein. That alone is the doctrine which is according to godliness, and all acceptable obedience unto God is the obedience of faith. Whatever men do or pretend unto in a way of duty unto him, whereof the truth of the gospel is not the spring and measure, which is not guided and animated thereby, it is not what God at present requireth, nor what he will eternally reward. Wherefore, although men may, and multitudes do, under a profession of that truth, live in open rebellion against its power; yet the wounds of religion are not incurable, nor its stains indelible, whilst the proper remedy is owned, and wants only due application. But if this truth itself be corrupted or deserted, if its most glorious mysteries be abused or despised, and if its most important doctrines be impeached of error and falsehood, if the vain imaginations and carnal reasonings of the serpentine wits of men be substituted in their room, or exalted above them, what hope is there of a recovery? the breach will grow like the sea, until there be none to heal it. If the fountains of the waters of the sanctuary be poisoned in their first rising, they will not heal the nations unto whom they come. Where the doctrine of truth is corrupted, the hearts of men will not be changed by it, nor their lives reformed.

How all this hath come to pass in the apostacy of the Roman church, and what multitudes of professed Christians are carried down the stream of that defection, is acknowledged among us who are called Protestants. How therein by various degrees the corruption of the

doctrine of the gospel gave occasion unto the depravation of men's manners on the one hand, and the wickedness of men's lives on the other hand, led the way unto, and served to make necessary a farther perverting of the doctrine itself, until at length it is hard to determine, whether the multiplied errors of that church have made the reintroduction of true holiness and evangelical obedience, or the corrupt worldly conversation of the generality of the members of its communion, have rendered the restoration of truth more difficult and unpracticable in their present station, is in part declared in the ensuing discourses, and deserves yet a more particular and distinct inquiry into. In general, certain it is, that as error with superstition on the one hand in the minds of the teachers or guides of the church, and sin with conformity unto the ways, manners, and course of the present evil world in the body of the people, were mutually assistant unto their joint introduction into the profession and lives of Christians; so having possessed themselves of the visible church state of many nations, they are so interwoven in their interests, as to be mutually assistant to the exclusion of that truth and holiness which they have dispossessed. And whereas, moreover, they have found out the pretence of infallibility, stretched wide enough, in their own apprehensions, to cover, patronize, and justify the most enormous errors, and highest inconformity of life unto the gospel, all hopes of their recovery are utterly defeated, but what are placed on the sovereign grace and almighty power of God.

That there is also another endeavour of the same kind, and for the same general end, namely, to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, though in another way, and unto another extreme, vigorously carried on in the world by the Socinians, and those who either absolutely or for the most part comply with them in their perni-

cious ways, is no less known, nor ought to be much less bewailed. For this endeavour also is attended with many advantages to give it success. The corruption of the doctrine of the gospel in the Roman church, as it sprang out of the ignorance, darkness, superstition, and carnal affections of the minds of men; so it is by the same means preserved. But although those things, in those ages and places where they abounded, gave sufficient and effectual advantage to its gradual introduction, and although the principles of it be now so inlaid with the secular interests of the generality of mankind in most of the nations in Europe, as to secure its station and possessions; yet in that emancipation of reason from under the bond of superstition and tradition, in that liberty of rational inquiry unto the true nature and causes of all things, in that refusal to captivate their understandings in religion to the bare authority of men no wiser than themselves, which all pretend unto at present, who dare venture on an ordinary converse in the world; it may seem marvellous, how it should get ground, and enlarge its territories, unless it be among them who are evidently bought off from themselves and from under the conduct of their own minds by some outward advantages, which they look upon as a valuable consideration. The true reasons hereof are inquired into in the ensuing discourse. But this new attempt, despising the baffled aids of superstition and carnal affections, which were in former ages predominant and effectual, takes shelter under a pretence of reason, and the suitableness of what is proposed in it, unto the natural light and understandings of men. Whatever there is or is not in this matter, of the relation that is between religion and reason, yet this being grown, through the increase of learning and converse, with a decay of the true fear of God, the very idol of this age; whoever will prepare a sacrifice unto

it, though it be of the most holy mysteries of the gospel, he shall not fail of good entertainment and applause. And whoever shall refuse to cast incense on its altar, shall be sure to be exploded, as one that professeth himself to be a fool, and even a common enemy unto mankind. Tell men that there are some things in religion that are above reason, as it is finite and limited, and some things contrary unto it, as it is depraved and corrupted, and they will reply (what is true in itself but wofully abused), that yet their reason is the best, yea, only means which they have to judge of what is true or false. The liberty of men's own rational faculties having got the great vogue in the world (as indeed it is that which is most excellent therein of what is merely in and of it), it is fond to expect that it should not meet with a pernicious abuse, as every thing that hath any worth in it hath always done, when advanced unto such a reputation as might render it liable thereunto. For no man will ever adventure to pervail himself of that which others have no respect unto, or do despise. Herein then lies the advantage of this sort of men, the Socinians I mean, and their adherents, in attempting to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, and hereon depends all their success therein. First, they get the advantage of the ground in general, by pretending to reduce all men unto right reason, as the just measure and standard of truth. Put in any exceptions unto this proposal, endeavour to affix its bounds and proper measures, offer the consideration of divine revelation in its proper use and place, and you give away the cause among the many, who design at least to come in as common sharers in the reputation that reason hath got above all things in the world. By the confident use of this artifice, and the most absurd application of this principle unto things infinite, and the most holy mysteries of divine revelation, have this sort of men, otherwise, for the most

part, as weak and insufficient in their reasonings as their predecessors in the like attempts, got the reputation of the most rational handlers of sacred things. And when, being harnessed with this advantage, they proceed to the proposal of their opinions in particular, they have such an interest beforehand in the minds of men by nature, and have things so disposed and prepared for their reception, that it is no wonder if oft-times they obtain success. For they are all of them designed unto one of these two heads: First, That there is no reason why we should believe any thing that reason cannot comprehend, so that we may safely conclude, that whatever is above our reason is contrary unto it, and for what is so, it is destructive to the very natural constitution of our souls not to reject. And, secondly, That the mind of man is, in its present condition, every way sufficient unto the whole of its duties, both intellectual and moral, with respect unto God, and to answer whatever is required of us. Upon the matter they pretend only to undertake the patronage of human nature, and the common reason and honesty of mankind, against those imputations of weakness, depravations, and corruption in things spiritual, wherewith by some it is charged and defamed. And although it be contrary unto the universal experience of the whole world, yet might this design be allowed what commendation men please, so that the defence of nature were not undertaken expressly against the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the redemption that is in his blood, and the whole mystery of the gospel. But whereas it is a part of the depravation of our nature not to discover its own depravations, and all those opinions are suited to give it countenance against what it is not sensible of, and whereof it is not willing to own the charge, it is no wonder if with very many they receive a ready entertainment. And whereas

they seem to interest men in that reputation, which reason in the things of God had obtained in the world, and thereby to countenance them in the contempt of others as weak and irrational, things pleasing to the depraved minds of men, it is more than probable that they will make a pernicious progress in one degree or another. So doth the subtle enemy of our salvation make his advantage of the disposition, inclination, and state, of every age and season. Without his interposition, devotion of old might have been carried on without superstition, and in this age the use of reason might be vindicated, without a rejection of the necessity of supernatural illumination, and the great truths of the gospel. But the better any thing is, the more noisome it will be, when once he hath mixed his poison with it.

It were to be wished that the defection from the truth of the gospel complained of, were confined unto the instances already mentioned, though in them the event be deplorable among multitudes of professed Christians. But the same in some measure and degree is come to pass among Protestants also. Men grow weary of the truths which have been professed ever since the reformation, yea, of those in particular, which gave occasion thereunto, and without which it had never been attempted. For besides that many fall off unto those extremes of error before insisted on, some on the one hand, and some on the other, the reformed religion is, by not a few, so taken off from its old foundations, so unhinged from those pillars of important truths which it did depend upon, and so sullied by a confused medley of noisome opinions, as that its loss in reputation of stability and usefulness seems almost irreparable. Hence are divisions, debates, and animosities multiplied about the principal articles of our religion, whereby those tongues are divided and

hands engaged in mutual intestine conflicts, which all united were few enough to preserve the remainders of the Protestant profession from the artifices and power of him, who doth not despair once more to impose his yoke on the neck of the whole Christian world. For nothing can more prepare the way of his success, than the shaking of the doctrine of the reformed churches from that consistency, wherein for so long a time it stood firm and stable against all opposition.

But there is in this matter nothing absolutely new under the sun; no instance can be given of any church or nation in the world, which ever received the profession of the gospel, that did not sooner or later either totally, or in some considerable degrees, fall off from the doctrine which it reveals and the obedience which it requireth. Men do but deceive themselves, who suppose that the purity of religion will be preserved in confessions and canons, whilst some make it their business to corrupt its truth, and few or none make it their business to preserve its power. And therefore at this day, on one account or other, the defection is almost catholic. For it is in vain for any to pretend that the present general visible profession of Christianity, doth in any tolerable measure answer the original pattern of it in the Scripture, or the first transcript thereof in the primitive believers. And that, which in this degenerate state of things doth principally exercise the minds of considerate men, is, whether there ought to be an immediate endeavour to reduce as many as will or can comply therewith unto the original standard in profession, obedience, and worship, or whether the present posture of things be not so far to be complied withal, as to preserve therein the small remainders of religion among the community of Christians who are not capable of such a reduction. The difference, that is in the judgments of men herein, is the ground of all

those lesser controversies and opinions, which will be composed and have an end put unto them, when God shall graciously afford unto us all a fresh revival of evangelical faith, love, and holiness; and, I fear, not before.

Upon some considerations of this state of things in the world, and under fears, perhaps not altogether groundless, that a farther progress will yet be made in this woful declension from the power and purity of evangelical truth, I set myself into a general inquiry what might be the secret causes and reasons whence it is that all sorts of persons, in all ages, have been so prone to apostatize from the sincere profession of the gospel in faith and obedience, as experience in the success of things manifests them to have been. And moreover an occasion was administered unto thoughts of that nature, from my engagement in the exposition of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the apostle so eminently describes the nature of total apostacy, with the end of apostates in the righteous judgment of God. For considering the greatness of that sin, and the terror of the Lord with respect thereunto, and not knowing whereunto the daily advance of impiety, profaneness, and abominable lusts, with ignorance, error, and superstition might at length arrive; thoughtfulness of what might be required at the last day of myself, though cast in a mean and obscure condition in the world, did not a little exercise my mind. The glory of God, the honour of Christ and the gospel, the eternal welfare of the souls of men being eminently concerned, I knew not how he could have the least satisfaction in the truth and reality of his own Christianity, who was not greatly affected with, and did not really mourn for, their suffering in this woful apostacy. What I have attained unto in that kind, I have no reason to declare; but hope I may

say without the offence of any, that, as I verily believe neither my prayers nor tears have been proportionable unto the causes of them in this matter, so I can and will say that they have been real and sincere.

I was not ignorant of the weakness and impertinency of all thoughts, that a person of my mean condition in the world, disadvantaged by all imaginable circumstances that might prejudice the most sincere endeavours, should attempt any thing with respect unto the relief of nations or national churches, which yet are not without the verge of this fatal evil. To mourn for them in secret, to labour in prayers and supplications for a more plentiful effusión of the Spirit of Christ upon them for their good, are things, which although they may despise, yet God will accept in and from the meanest of them that call on his name in sincerity. Unto whom other opportunities and advantages are granted, from them other things will be required. And it is no doubt a great account they have to give, who are admitted and esteemed as those whose place and duty it is to stem the current of overflowing impiety and profaneness, and effectually to apply the sovereign remedies of all those evils unto the souls and consciences of men. Sad will it be for them under whose hand this breach shall be, if they endeavour not to prevent it with their utmost diligence, and the open hazard of all their earthly concerns. A learned writer of the church of England affirms, 'That there were two no small sins of noisome hypocrisy, that he had espied among others; the one, an opinion there can be no fit matter of martyrdom in a state authorizing the true profession of that religion which among many we like best, and left unto ourselves would make choice of. The other, which in part feeds this, a persuasion that mere errors in doctrine or opinion, are more pernicious than affected indulgence to lewd practices, or conti-

nuance in sinful courses, or open breaches of God's commandments.' And after he had declared, that 'ministers of the gospel may deny Christ, or manifest their being ashamed of the gospel, by not opposing his word as they ought unto the sins of men;' he adds, 'that any age since Christian religion was first propagated, hath wanted store of martyrs, is more to be attributed unto the negligence, ignorance, and hypocrisy, or want of courage in Christ's ambassadors, or appointed pastors, than unto the sincerity, mildness, or fidelity of the flock, especially of the belwethers or chief ringleaders;' Jac. tom. 1. b. 4. c. 4. with much more to the same purpose, which will deserve some men's considerations, before all things of this nature be too late.

But there is a duty of trading with a single talent. And if there be a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. And this alone hath made me adventure the proposal of my thoughts about the nature, causes, and occasions of the present defection from the gospel, and decay of holiness, with the means of preservation from its infection, and prevention of its prevalency in private persons. For it is to no purpose to shut up all endeavours under fruitless complaints, nor yet to attempt an opposition unto effects whose causes are not well known and considered. Wherefore the investigation and declaration of the causes of this evil, is the principal subject of the ensuing discourses. And if I have attained but thus much, that persons of more understanding and abilities to find out the hidden springs of the inundation of sin and errors in the Christian world, and who have more advantages to improve their discoveries unto public good, shall be hereby excited to undertake so necessary a work and duty, I shall esteem myself to have received a full reward.

There is one thing yet whereof I must advise those readers which are pleased to concern themselves in any writings of mine. The publishing of this exposition of some verses of the sixth chapter of the Epistle unto the Hebrews, may have an appearance of my deserting that continued exposition of the whole epistle, which I had designed. But as I know not what I may attain unto, in the very near approach of that season, wherein I must lay down this tabernacle, and the daily warning which through many infirmities I have thereof, so I am resolved whilst I live, to proceed in that work as God shall enable, and other present necessary duties will allow. And the sole reason added unto the seasonableness (as I supposed) of this discourse, why this part of the exposition is singly proposed unto public view, was, because the thoughts which arose thereon were drawn forth into such a length, as would have been too great a digression from the context and design of the apostle.

THE

NATURE AND CAUSES

OF

APOSTACY

FROM THE GOSPEL.

CHAP. I.

The nature of apostacy from the gospel declared, in an exposition of HEB. vi. 4—6.

INTENDING an inquiry into the nature, causes, and occasions of the present defection that is in the world from the truth, holiness, and worship of the gospel, I shall lay the foundation of my whole discourse, in an exposition of that passage in the Epistle of Paul the apostle unto the Hebrews, wherein he gives an account both of the nature of apostacy, and of the punishment due unto apostates. For as this will lead us naturally unto what is designed, so an endeavour to free the context from the difficulties wherewith it is generally supposed to be attended, and to explain the mind of the Holy Ghost therein, may be neither unacceptable nor unuseful: and this is chap. vi. 4—6. whose words are these that follow.

Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου, καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους Θεοῦ ῥῆμα, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, καὶ παραπεσόντας, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.

Ἀδύνατον γὰρ. 'Impossibile enim;' that is, 'est;' 'it is impossible.' Syr. אלא לא משכחין, 'But they cannot.' This respects the power of the persons themselves, and not the event of things; it may be not improperly as to the sense. Beza and Erasmus; 'fieri non potest;' 'it cannot be.' The same with 'impossible.' But the use of the word *ἀδύνατον* in

the New Testament, which signifies sometimes only what is very difficult, not what is absolutely denied, makes it useful to retain the same word, as in our translation; 'for it is impossible.'

Τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας; הנון דחדא זבן למעמודיתא נחתו: 'Those who one time,' or 'once descended unto baptism;' of which interpretation we must speak afterward. All others, 'qui semel fuerint illuminati,' 'who were once enlightened.' Only the Ethiopic follows the Syriac; some read 'illustrati,' to the same purpose.

Γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. Vulg. Lat. 'Gustaverant etiam donum cœleste;' 'etiam,' for 'et.' Others express the article by the pronoun, by reason of its reduplication. 'Et gustaverint donum illud cœleste;' 'and have tasted of that heavenly gift;' Syr. 'The gift that is from heaven.' And this the emphasis in the original seems to require. 'And have tasted of that heavenly gift.'

Καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου. 'Et participes facti sunt Spiritus sancti;' Vulg. Lat. 'And are made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' All others, 'facti fuerint;' 'have been' made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Syr. רוחא דקודשא, the 'Spirit of holiness.'

Καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους Θεοῦ ῥῆμα. Vulg. Lat. 'Et gustaverunt nihilominus bonum Dei verbum.' Rhem. 'Have moreover tasted the good word of God.' But 'moreover' doth not express 'nihilominus:' and have 'notwithstanding,' which hath no place here, καλὸν ῥῆμα, 'verbum pulchrum.'

Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. 'Virtutesque seculi futuri.' Syr. חילא 'virtutem;' the 'power.' Vulg. 'seculi venturi.' We cannot in our language distinguish between 'futurum' and 'venturum,' and so render it, 'the world to come.'

Καὶ παραπεσόντας. Vulg. 'Et prolapsi sunt.' Rhem. 'And are fallen.' Others, 'si prolabantur,' which the sense requires: 'if they fall,' that is, 'away,' as our translation; properly. Syr. דתוב נחטין 'that sin again,' somewhat dangerously; for it is one kind of sinning only that is included and expressed.

Πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν. Vulg. 'Rursus renovari ad pœnitentiam;' 'to be renewed again to repentance;' rendering the active verb passively. So Beza also, 'ut denuo renoventur ad resipiscentiam:' 'that they should again be

renewed to repentance.' The word is active, as rendered by ours, 'to renew them again to repentance.'

'Ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. 'Rursum crucifigentes sibimetipsis filium Dei.' Καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας. Vulg. 'Et ostentui habentes.' Rhem. 'And making him a mockery.' Eras. 'Ludibrio habentes.' Beza, 'Ignominiæ exponentes.' One of late, 'Ad exemplum Judæorum excruciant;' 'torment him as did the Jews.'

'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away,' (for any) 'to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and put him to open shame' (or treat him ignominiously).

That this passage in our apostle's discourse hath been looked upon as accompanied with great difficulties, is known to all. And many have the differences been about its interpretation. For both doctrinally and practically, sundry have here stumbled and miscarried. It is almost generally agreed upon, that from these words, and the colourable but indeed perverse interpretation, and application made of them by some in the primitive times, occasioned by the then present circumstances of things, to be mentioned afterward, the Latin church was so backward in receiving the epistle itself, that it had not absolutely prevailed therein in the days of Jerome, as we have elsewhere declared. Wherefore it is necessary, that we should a little inquire into the occasion of the great contests which have been in the church almost in all ages, about the sense of this place.

It is known that the primitive church, according to its duty, was carefully watchful about the holiness and upright walking of all that were admitted into the society and fellowship of it. Hence, upon every known and visible failing, they required an open repentance from the offenders, before they would admit them unto a participation of the sacred mysteries. But upon flagitious and scandalous crimes, such as murder, adultery, or idolatry, in many churches they would never admit those who had been guilty of them into their communion any more. Their greatest and most signal trial was with respect unto them, who through fear of death com-

plied with the Gentiles in their idolatrous worship, in the time of persecution. For they had fixed no certain general rule whereby they should unanimously proceed, but every church exercised severity or lenity, according as they saw cause, upon the circumstances of particular instances. Hence Cyprian in his banishment would not positively determine concerning those of the church in Carthage, who had so sinned and fallen, but deferred his thoughts until his return; when he resolved to advise with the whole church, and settle all things according to the counsel that should be agreed on amongst them. Yea, many of his epistles are on this subject, peculiarly; and in them all, if compared together, it is evident, that there was no rule agreed upon herein; nor was he himself well resolved in his own mind, though strictly on all occasions opposing Novatianus, wherein it had been well if his arguments had answered his zeal. Before this the church of Rome was esteemed in particular more remiss in their discipline, and more free than other churches in their readmission unto communion of notorious offenders. Hence Tertullian, in his book de Pœnitentia, reflects on Zepherinus the bishop of Rome, that he had 'admitted adulterers unto repentance, and thereby unto the communion of the church.' But that church proceeding in her lenity, and every day enlarging her charity, Novatus and Novatianus, taking offence thereat, advanced an opinion in the contrary extreme. For they denied all hope of church pardon, or of a return unto ecclesiastical communion, unto them who had fallen into open sin after baptism; and in especial peremptorily excluded all persons whatsoever who had outwardly complied with idolatrous worship in time of persecution, without respect unto any distinguishing circumstances. Yea, they seem to have excluded them from all expectation of forgiveness from God himself. But their followers, terrified with the uncharitableness and horror of this persuasion, tempered it so far, as leaving all persons absolutely to the mercy of God upon their repentance, they only denied such as we mentioned before a readmission into church communion, as Acesius speaks expressly in Socrates; lib. 1. cap. 7. Now this opinion they endeavoured to confirm, as from the nature and use of baptism, which was not to be reiterated; whereon they judged, that no pardon was

to be granted unto them, who fell into those sins which they lived in before, and were cleansed from at their baptism; so principally from this place of our apostle, wherein they thought their whole opinion was taught and confirmed. And so usually doth it fall out very unhappily with men, who think they clearly see some peculiar opinion or persuasion, in some singular text of Scripture,[a] and will not bring their interpretation of it unto the analogy of faith, whereby they might see how contrary it is to the whole design and current of the word in other places. But the church of Rome, on the other side, judging rightly from other directions given in the Scripture, that the Novatians transgressed the rule of charity and gospel discipline in their severities; yet as it should seem, and is very probable, knew not how to answer the objection from this place of our apostle. Therefore did they rather choose for a season, to suspend their assent unto the authority of the whole epistle, than to prejudice the church by its admission. And well was it that some learned men afterward, by their sober interpretations of the words, plainly evinced that no countenance was given in them unto the errors of the Novatians; for without this it is much to be feared, that some would have preferred their interest in their present controversy before the authority of it, which would in the issue have proved ruinous to the truth itself. For the epistle being designed of God unto the common edification of the church, would have at length prevailed, whatever sense men through their prejudices and ignorance should put upon any passages of it. But this controversy is long since buried; the generality of the churches in the world being sufficiently remote from that which was truly the mistake of the Novatians, yea, the most of them do bear peaceably in their communion, without the least exercise of gospel dis-

[a] Solenne est hæreticis alicujus capituli ancipitis occasione adversus exercitum sententiarum instrumenti totius armari. Tert. de Pudicit. Utique æquum, incerta de certis, obscura de manifestis præjudicari, ut ne inter discordiam certorum et incertorum, manifestorum et obscurorum, fides dissipetur. Id. de Resur. Ἅπαντα ὀρθὰ ἐνώπιον τῶν συνιόντων, φησὶ ἡ γραφὴ τοῦτ' ἐστι τῶν ὅσοι ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ σαφηνίσθησαν τῶν γραφῶν ἐξήγησιν κατὰ τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν κανόνα ἐκδεχόμενοι διασώζουσι, κανὼν δὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὸς ἡ συνῳδία καὶ συμφωνία νόμου τε καὶ προφητῶν τῇ τὸν τοῦ κυρίου παρουσίαν παραδιδομένη διαθήκη. Clem. Abr. Stromat. 6. Εὖ οἶδα ὅτι ῥητὰ τινα παραλήψονται γραφῆς οἱ καὶ ταῦτα βουλόμενοι τολμᾶν φάσκειν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ γεγονέναι, μὴ δυνάμενοι ἓν ὕφος ἀποδεῖξαι τῆς γραφῆς αἴτιο μείνῃ μὲν τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας ἀποδεχομένης δὲ τοὺς εὖ πράττοντας, καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον κακίνα λεγούσης ἅτινα περισπᾶν δοκεῖ ὀλίγα ὄντα τοὺς ἁμαθοὺς τὰ θεῖα γράμματα ἀναγινώσκοντας. Origen. ad Cels. lib. 6.

cipline towards them, such persons as concerning whom the dispute was of old, whether they should ever in this world be admitted into the communion of the church, although upon their open and professed repentance. We shall not therefore at present need to labour in this controversy.

But the sense of these words hath been the subject of great contests, on other occasions also. For some do suppose and contend, that they are real and true believers, who are deciphered by the apostle, and that their character is given us in and by sundry inseparable adjuncts and properties of such persons; hence they conclude, that such believers may totally and finally fall from grace, and perish eternally. Yea, it is evident that this hypothesis of the final apostacy of true believers, is that which influenceth their minds and judgments to suppose that such are here intended. Wherefore others who will not admit that according to the tenour of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, true believers can perish everlastingly, do say, that either they are not here intended, or if they are, that the words are only comminatory, wherein although the consequence in them in a way of arguing be true, namely, that on the supposition laid down, the inference is certain, yet the supposition is not asserted in order unto a certain consequent, whence it should follow, that true believers might so really fall away, and absolutely perish. And these things have been the matter of many contests among learned men.

Again; there have been sundry mistakes in the practical application of the intention of these words unto the consciences of men, mostly made by themselves, who are concerned. For whereas, by reason of sin, they have been surprised with terrors and troubles of conscience, they have withal in their darkness and distress, supposed themselves to be fallen into the condition here described by our apostle; and consequently to be irrecoverably lost. And these apprehensions usually befall men on two occasions. For some having been overtaken with some great actual sin, against the second table, after they have made a profession of the gospel, and having their consciences harassed with a sense of their guilt (as it will fall out where men are not greatly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin), they judge that they are fallen under the sentence denounced in

this Scripture against such sinners, as they suppose themselves to be, whereby their state is irrecoverable. Others do make the same judgment of themselves, because they have fallen from that constant compliance with their convictions, which formerly led them unto a strict performance of duties, and this in some course of long continuance. Now whereas it is certain, that the apostle in this discourse gives no countenance unto that severity of the Novatians, whereby they excluded offenders everlastingly from the peace and communion of the church; nor to the final apostacy of true believers, which he testifieth against in this very chapter, in compliance with innumerable other testimonies of Scripture to the same purpose; nor doth he teach any thing whereby the conscience of any sinner, who desires to return to God, and to find acceptance with him, should be discouraged or disheartened: we must attend unto the exposition of the words, in the first place, so as not to break in upon the boundaries of other truths, nor transgress against the analogy of faith. And we shall find that this whole discourse, compared with other Scriptures, and freed from the prejudices that men have brought unto it, is both remote from administering any just occasion to the mistakes before mentioned, and is a needful wholesome commination, duly to be considered by all professors of the gospel.

In the words we consider, 1. The connexion of them unto those foregoing, intimating the occasion of the introduction of this whole discourse. 2. The subject described in them, or the persons spoken of, under sundry qualifications, which may be inquired into jointly and severally. 3. What is supposed concerning them. 4. What is affirmed of them on that supposition.

1. The connexion of the words is included in the causal conjunction, γὰρ, 'for.' It respects the introduction of a reason for what had been before discoursed, as also of the limitation which the apostle added expressly unto his purpose of making a progress in their farther instruction; 'if God permit.' And he doth not herein express his judgment that they to whom he wrote were such as he describes, for he afterward declares that he 'hoped better things' concerning them; only it was necessary to give them this caution, that they might take due care not to be such. And

whereas he had manifested that they were slow as to the making of a progress in knowledge, and a suitable practice; he lets them here know the danger that there was in continuing in that slothful condition. For not to proceed in the ways of the gospel and obedience thereunto, is an untoward entrance into a total relinquishment of the one and the other. That therefore they might be acquainted with the danger hereof, and be stirred up to avoid that danger, he gives them an account of the miserable condition of those, who, after a profession of the gospel, beginning at a non-proficiency under it, do end in apostacy from it. And we may see, that the severest comminations are not only useful in the preaching of the gospel, but exceeding necessary towards persons that are observed to be slothful in their profession.

2. The description of the persons that are the subject spoken of, is given in five instances of the evangelical privileges, whereof they were made partakers, notwithstanding all which, and against their obliging efficacy to the contrary, it is supposed that they may wholly desert the gospel itself. And some things we may observe concerning this description of them in general. As, 1. The apostle designing to express the fearful state and judgment of these persons, describes them by such things as may fully evidence it to be, as unavoidable, so righteous and equal. Those things must be some eminent privileges and advantages, whereof they were made partakers by the gospel. These being despised in their apostacy, do proclaim their destruction from God to be rightly deserved. 2. That all these privileges do consist in certain especial operations of the Holy Ghost, which were peculiar unto the dispensation of the gospel; such as they neither were, nor could be made partakers of in their Judaism. For the Spirit in this sense, was not received by 'the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith;' Gal. iii. 2. And this was a testimony unto them, that they were delivered from the bondage of the law, namely, by a participation of that Spirit which was the great privilege of the gospel. 3. Here is no express mention of any covenant grace or mercy in them, or towards them; nor of any duty of faith or obedience which they had performed. Nothing of justification, sanctification, or adoption, is expressly assigned unto them. Afterward, when he comes to declare his hopes and

persuasion concerning these Hebrews, that they were not such as those whom he had before described, nor such as would so fall away unto perdition, he doth it upon three grounds, whereon they were differenced from them. As, 1. That they had 'such things as did accompany salvation,' that is, such as salvation is inseparable from. None of these things therefore had he ascribed unto those whom he describeth in this place; for if he had so done, they would not have been unto him an argument and evidence of a contrary end, that these should not fall away and perish, as well as those. Wherefore he ascribes nothing to these here in the text, that doth peculiarly accompany salvation; ver. 9. 2. He describes them, by their duties of obedience and fruits of faith. This was their 'work and labour of love' towards the name of God; ver. 10. And hereby also doth he difference them from these in the text, concerning whom he supposeth that they may perish eternally; which these fruits of saving faith and sincere love cannot do. 3. He adds, that in the preservation of those there mentioned, the faithfulness of God was concerned; 'God is not unrighteous to forget.' For they were such (he intended) as were interested in the covenant of grace, with respect whereunto alone, there is any engagement on the faithfulness or righteousness of God, to preserve men from apostacy and ruin; and there is so with an equal respect unto all who are so taken into that covenant. But of these in the text, he supposeth no such thing, and thereupon doth not intimate, that either the righteousness or faithfulness of God were any way engaged for their preservation, but rather the contrary. This whole description, therefore, refers unto some especial gospel privileges, which professors in those days were promiscuously made partakers of, and what they were in particular, we must in the next place inquire.

The first thing in the description is, that they were ἅπαξ φωτισθέντες, 'once enlightened.' Saith the Syriac translation, as we observed, 'once baptized;' it is very certain, that early in the church, baptism was called φωτισμὸς, 'illumination;' and φωτίζειν, to 'enlighten,' was used for to 'baptize.' And the set times wherein they solemnly administered that ordinance, were called ἡμέραι τῶν φωτῶν, the 'days of light.' Hereunto the Syriac interpreter seems to

have had respect: and the word ἅπαξ 'once,' may give countenance hereunto. Baptism was once only to be celebrated, according to the constant faith of the church in all ages. And they called baptism 'illumination,' because it being one ordinance of the initiation of persons into a participation of all the mysteries of the church, they were thereby translated out of the kingdom of darkness into that of light and grace. And it seems to give farther countenance hereunto, in that, baptism really was the beginning and foundation of a participation of all the other spiritual privileges that are mentioned afterward. For it was usual in those times, that upon the baptizing of persons, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts peculiar to the days of the gospel, as we have shewed in our consideration of the order between baptism and imposition of hands. And this opinion hath so much of probability in it, that having nothing therewithal unsuited unto the analogy of faith, or design of the place, I should embrace it, if the word itself, as here used, did not require another interpretation. For it was a good while after the writing of this epistle, and all other parts of the New Testament, at least an age or two, if not more, before this word was used mystically to express baptism. In the whole Scripture it hath another sense, denoting an inward operation of the Spirit, and not the outward administration of an ordinance. And it is too much boldness to take a word in a peculiar sense in one single place, diverse from its proper signification and constant use, if there be no circumstances in the text forcing us thereunto, as here are not. And for the word ἅπαξ 'once,' it is not to be restrained unto this particular, but refers equally unto all the instances that follow; signifying no more but that those mentioned were really and truly partakers of them.

Φωτίζομαι, is to give light or knowledge by teaching; the same with הורה, which is therefore so translated oftentimes by the Greeks. As by Aquila, Exod. iv. 12. Psal. cxix. 33. Prov. iv. 4. Isa. xxvii. 11. as Drusius observes. And it is so by the LXX. Judges xiii. 8. 2 Kings xii. 2. xvii. 27. Our apostle useth it for to 'make manifest,' that is, 'bring to light,' 1 Cor. iv. 5. 2 Tim. i. 10. And the meaning of it, John i. 9. where we render it 'lighteth,' is to

teach. And φωτισμὸς is knowledge upon instruction, 2 Cor. iv. 4. εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι αὐτοῖς τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 'that the light of the gospel should not shine into them;' that is, the knowledge of it; so ver. 6. πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως, 'The light of the knowledge.' Wherefore, to be 'enlightened' in this place, is to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a spiritual apprehension thereof. And this is so termed on a double account.

1. Of the object, or the things known and apprehended. For life and immortality are 'brought to light by the gospel;' 2 Tim. i. 10. Hence it is called 'light.' 'The inheritance of the saints in light.' And the state which men are thereby brought into, is so called in opposition to the darkness that is in the world without it; 1 Pet. ii. 9. The world without the gospel is the kingdom of Satan; ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται; 1 John v. 19. The whole of the world, and all that belongs unto it, in distinction from, and opposition unto, the new creation, is under the power of the wicked one, the prince of the power of darkness, and so is full of darkness; it is τόπος αὐχμηρὸς, 2 Pet. i. 19. 'a dark place;' wherein ignorance, folly, errors, and superstition do dwell and reign. By the power and efficacy of this darkness are men kept at a distance from God, and know not whither they go. This is called 'walking in darkness,' 1 John i. 6. whereunto 'walking in the light,' that is, the knowledge of God in Christ by the gospel, is opposed, ver. 7. On this account is our instruction in the knowledge of the gospel called 'illumination,' because itself is light.

2. On the account of the subject, or the mind itself, whereby the gospel is apprehended. For the knowledge which is received thereby, expels that darkness, ignorance, and confusion, which the mind before was filled and possessed withal. The knowledge, I say, of the doctrines of the gospel, concerning the person of Christ, of God's being in him reconciling the world to himself, of his offices, work, and mediation, and the like heads of divine revelation, doth set up a spiritual light in the minds of men, enabling them to discern what before was utterly hid from them, whilst alienated from the life of God, through their ignorance. Of this light and knowledge there are several degrees, accord-

ing to the means of instruction which men do enjoy, the capacity they have to receive it, and the diligence they use to that purpose: but a competent measure of the knowledge of the fundamental and most material principles or doctrines of the gospel is required unto all that may thence be said to be illuminated; that is, freed from the darkness and ignorance they once lived in, 2 Pet. i. 18—20. This is the first property whereby the persons intended, are described; they are such as were illuminated by the instruction they had received in the doctrine of the gospel, and the impression made thereby on their minds, by the Holy Ghost; for this is a common work of his, and is here so reckoned: and the apostle would have us know, that

I. It is a great mercy, a great privilege, to be enlightened with the doctrine of the gospel, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost. But,

II. It is such a privilege as may be lost, and end in the aggravation of the sin, and condemnation of those who were made partakers of it. And,

III. Where there is a total neglect of the due improvement of this privilege and mercy, the condition of such persons is hazardous, as inclining towards apostacy.

Thus much lies open and manifest in the text. But that we may more particularly discover the nature of this first part of the character of apostates, for their sakes who may look after their own concernment therein, we may yet a little more distinctly express the nature of that illumination and knowledge which is here ascribed unto them; and how it is lost in apostacy will afterward appear. And,

1. There is a knowledge of spiritual things that is purely natural and disciplinary, attainable and attained without any especial aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost. As this is evident in common experience, so especially among such as casting themselves on the study of spiritual things, are yet utter strangers unto all spiritual gifts. Some knowledge of the Scripture and the things contained in it, is attainable at the same rate of pains and study with that of any other art or science.

2. The illumination intended, being a gift of the Holy Ghost, differs from, and is exalted above, this knowledge that is purely natural. For it makes nearer approaches

unto the light of spiritual things in their own nature, than the other doth. Notwithstanding the utmost improvement of scientifical notions that are purely natural, the things of the gospel in their own nature are not only unsuited unto the wills and affections of persons endued with them, but are really foolishness unto their minds. And as unto that goodness and excellency which give desirableness unto spiritual things, this knowledge discovers so little of them, that most men hate the things which they profess to believe. But this spiritual illumination gives the mind some satisfaction, with delight and joy in the things that are known. By that beam whereby it shines into darkness, although it be not fully comprehended, yet it represents the way of the gospel as a 'way of righteousness,' 2 Pet. ii. 21. which reflects a peculiar regard of it on the mind.

Moreover, the knowledge that is merely natural, hath little or no power upon the soul, either to keep it from sin or to constrain it to obedience. There is not a more secure and profligate generation of sinners in the world, than those who are under the sole conduct of it. But the illumination here intended, is attended with efficacy, so as that it doth effectually press in the conscience and whole soul, unto an abstinence from sin, and the performance of all known duties: hence persons under the power of it and its convictions, do ofttimes walk blamelessly and uprightly in the world, so as not with the other to contribute unto the contempt of Christianity. Besides, there is such an alliance between spiritual gifts, that where any one of them doth reside, it hath assuredly others accompanying of it, or one way or other belonging unto its train, as is manifest in this place. Even a single talent is made up of many pounds. But the light and knowledge which is of a mere natural acquirement, is solitary, destitute of the society and countenance of any spiritual gift whatever. And these things are exemplified unto common observation every day.

3. There is a saving, sanctifying light and knowledge, which this spiritual illumination riseth not up unto: for, though it transiently affect the mind with some glances of the beauty, glory, and excellency of spiritual things; yet it doth not give that direct, steady, intuitive insight into them, which is obtained by grace. See 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv.

4. 6. Neither doth it renew, change, or transform the soul into a conformity unto the things known, by planting of them in the will and affections, as a gracious, saving light doth; 2 Cor. iii. 18. Rom. vi. 17. xii. 1. These things I judged necessary to be added, to clear the nature of the first character of apostates.

The second thing asserted in the description of them, is, 'That they have tasted of the heavenly gift;' γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου. The doubling of the article gives emphasis to the expression. And we must inquire, 1. What is meant by the heavenly gift; and, 2. What by tasting of it.

1. The gift of God; δωρεὰ, is either δόσις, 'donatio,' or δώρημα, 'donum.' Sometimes it is taken for the grant or giving itself, and sometimes for the thing given. In the first sense it is used, 2 Cor. ix. 15. 'Thanks be to God,' ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ, for 'his gift that cannot be declared;' that is, fully or sufficiently: now this gift was his grant of a free, charitable, and bountiful spirit to the Corinthians, in ministering unto the poor saints. The grant hereof is called 'God's gift;' so is the gift of Christ used also, Eph. iv. 7. 'According to the measure of the gift of Christ;' that is, according as he is pleased to give and grant of the fruits of the Spirit unto men. See Rom. v. 15. 17. Eph. iii. 7. Sometimes it is taken for the thing given; properly δῶρον or δώρημα, as James i. 17. so it is used, John iv. 10. 'If thou knewest the gift of God,' τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'The gift of God,' that is, the thing given by him, or to be given by him. It is, as many judge, the person of Christ himself in that place, which is intended. But the context makes it plain, that it is the Holy Ghost; for he is that living water which the Lord Jesus in that place promiseth to bestow. And so far as I can observe, δωρεὰ, the 'gift,' with respect unto God as denoting the thing given, is nowhere used but only to signify the Holy Ghost; and if it be so, the sense of this place is determined, Acts ii. 38. 'Ye shall receive' τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, 'the gift of the Holy Ghost;' not that which he gives, but that which he is. Chap. viii. 20. 'Thou hast thought' δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'that the gift of God may be purchased with money;' that is, the power of the Holy Ghost in mi-

raculous operations. So expressly, chap. x. 45. xi. 17. Elsewhere, δωρεὰ, so far as I can observe, when respecting God, doth not signify the thing given, but the grant itself. The Holy Spirit is signally the gift of God under the New Testament.

And he is said to be ἐπουράνιος, 'heavenly,' or from heaven. This may have respect unto his work and effect, they are heavenly as opposed to carnal and earthly. But principally it regards his mission by Christ after his ascension into heaven, Acts ii. 33. 'Being exalted and having received the promise of the Father, he sent the Spirit.' The promise of him was, that he should be sent from heaven, or ממעל, 'from above,' as God is said to be above, which is the same with 'heavenly;' Deut. iv. 39. 2 Chron. v. 23. Job xxxi. 2. 8. Isa. ii. 2. 15. ממרום, and chap. xlv. 8. When he came upon the Lord Christ to anoint him for his work, 'the heavens were opened,' and he came from above, Matt. iii. 16. so Acts ii. 2. At his first coming on the apostles, there came 'a sound from heaven.' Hence he is said to be ἀποσταλεὶς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, that is, to be ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ ἐπουράνιος, 'sent from heaven;' 1 Pet. i. 12. Wherefore, although he may be said to be 'heavenly' upon other accounts also, which therefore are not absolutely to be excluded, yet his being sent from heaven by Christ, after his ascension thither, and exaltation there, is principally here regarded. He therefore is this ἡ δωρεὰ ἡ ἐπουράνιος, the 'heavenly gift' here intended, though not absolutely, but with respect unto an especial work.

That which riseth up against this interpretation, is, that the Holy Ghost is expressly mentioned in the next clause; 'And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' It is not therefore probable that he should be here also intended.

Ans. 1. It is ordinary to have the same thing twice expressed in various words, to quicken the sense of them; and it is necessary it should be so, when there are divers respects unto the same thing; as there are in this place.

2. The following clause may be exegetical of this, declaring more fully and plainly what is here intended, which is usual also in the Scripture; so that nothing is cogent from this consideration, to disprove an interpretation so

suited to the sense of the place, and which the constant use of the word makes necessary to be embraced. But,

3. The Holy Ghost is here mentioned as the great gift of the gospel times, as coming down from heaven, not absolutely, not as unto his person, but with respect unto an especial work; namely, the change of the whole state of religious worship in the church of God; whereas, we shall see in the next words, he is spoken of only with respect unto external actual operations. But he was the great, the promised heavenly gift, to be bestowed under the New Testament, by whom God would institute and ordain a new way, and new rites of worship, upon the revelation of himself and will in Christ. Unto him was committed the reformation of all things in the church, whose time was now come; chap. ix. 10. The Lord Christ when he ascended into heaven, left all things standing and continuing in religious worship, as they had done from the days of Moses; though he had virtually put an end unto it. And he commanded his disciples, that they should attempt no alteration therein, until the Holy Ghost were sent from heaven to enable them thereunto, Acts i. 4, 5. But when he came as the great gift of God, promised under the New Testament, he removes all the carnal worship and ordinances of Moses, and that by the full revelation of the accomplishment of all that was signified by them; and appoints the new, holy, spiritual worship of the gospel, that was to succeed in their room. The Spirit of God, therefore, as bestowed for the introduction of the new gospel state, in truth and worship, is the heavenly gift here intended. Thus our apostle warneth these Hebrews, that they 'turn not away from him who speaketh from heaven;' chap. xii. 25. that is, Jesus Christ speaking in the dispensation of the gospel by the 'Holy Ghost sent from heaven.' And there is an antithesis included herein, between the law and the gospel; the former being given on earth, the latter being immediately from heaven. God in giving of the law made use of the ministry of angels, and that on the earth; but he gave the gospel church state, by that Spirit, which although he worketh on men in earth, and is said in every act or work to be sent from heaven, yet is he still in heaven, and always speaketh

from thence; as our Saviour said of himself, with respect, unto his divine nature, John iii. 13.

2. We may inquire, what it is to 'taste' of this heavenly gift. The expression of 'tasting' is metaphorical, and signifies no more but to make a trial or experiment; for so we do by tasting, naturally and properly of that which is tendered unto us to eat. We taste such things by the sense given us to discern our food, and then either receive or refuse them as we find occasion. It doth not therefore include eating, much less digestion and turning into nourishment of what is so tasted. For its nature being only thereby discerned, it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savour upon some other consideration. Some have observed, that to taste, is as much as to eat; as 2 Sam. iii. 35. 'I will not taste bread, or aught else.' But the meaning is, I will not so much as taste it, whence it was impossible he should eat it. And when Jonathan says, that he only tasted a little of the honey, 1 Sam. xiv. 29. it was an excuse and extenuation of what he had done. But it is unquestionably used for some kind of experience of the nature of things, Prov. xxxi. 18. טעמה טוב סחרה, 'She tasteth that her merchandise is good;' or hath experience of it, from its increase: Psal. xxxiv. 8. 'O taste and see that the Lord is good;' which Peter respects, 1 Epist. ii. 3. 'If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' or found it so by experience. It is therefore properly to make an experiment or trial of any thing, whether it be received or refused; and is sometimes opposed to eating and digestion, as Matt. xxvii. 34. That therefore which is ascribed unto these persons, is, that they had had an experience of the power of the Holy Ghost, that gift of God, in the dispensation of the gospel, the revelation of the truth, and institution of the spiritual worship of it; of this state, and of the excellency of it, they had made some trial, and had some experience; a privilege that all men were not made partakers of. And by this taste they were convinced, that it was far more excellent, than what they had been before accustomed unto, although now they had a mind to leave the finest wheat for their old acorns. Wherefore, although tasting contain a diminution in it, if compared with that spiritual eating and drinking, with that digestion of

gospel truths, turning them into nourishment, which are in true believers; yet, absolutely considered, it denotes that apprehension and experience of the excellency of the gospel as administered by the Spirit, which is a great privilege and spiritual advantage, the contempt whereof will prove an unspeakable aggravation of the sin, and the remediless ruin of apostates. 'The meaning then of this character given concerning these apostates, is, that they had some experience of the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit from heaven, in gospel administrations and worship. For what some say of faith, it hath here no place; and what others affirm of Christ, and his being the gift of God, comes in the issue unto what we have proposed. And we may observe, farther to clear the design of the apostle in this commination,

I. That all the gifts of God under the gospel are peculiarly heavenly; John iii. 12. Eph. i. 3. and that in opposition, 1. To earthly things; Coloss. iii. 11, 12. 2. To carnal ordinances, Heb. ix. 23. let them beware by whom they are despised.

II. The Holy Ghost, for the revelation of the mysteries of the gospel, and the institution of the ordinances of spiritual worship, is the great gift of God under the New Testament.

III. There is a goodness and excellency in this heavenly gift, which may be tasted or experienced in some measure by such as never receive them, in their life, power, and efficacy. They may taste, 1. Of the word, in its truth, not its power; 2. Of the worship of the church, in its outward order, not its inward beauty; 3. Of the gifts of the church, not its graces.

IV. A rejection of the gospel, its truth and worship, after some experience had of their worth and excellency, is a high aggravation of sin, and a certain presage of destruction.

The third property whereby these persons are described is added in those words; καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας Πνεύματος ἁγίου; 'and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' This is placed in the middle or centre of the privileges enumerated, two preceding it, and two following after; as that which is the root and animating principle of them all.

They all are effects of the Holy Ghost, in his gifts or his graces, and so do depend on the participation of him. Now men do so partake of the Holy Ghost, as they do receive him. And he may be received either as unto personal inhabitation, or as unto spiritual operations. In the first way the 'world cannot receive him;' John xiv. 17. where the world is opposed unto true believers, and therefore these here intended were not in that sense partakers of him. His operations respect his gifts. So to partake of him, is to have a part, share, or portion, in what he distributes by way of spiritual gifts; in answer unto that expression, 'All these worketh that one and selfsame spirit, dividing unto every one severally as he will;' 1 Cor. xii. 11. So Peter told Simon the magician, that he had no part in spiritual gifts, he was not partaker of the Holy Ghost; Acts viii. 21. Wherefore, to be partaker of the Holy Ghost, is to have a share in, and benefit of, his spiritual operations.

But, whereas the other things mentioned, are also gifts or operations of the Holy Ghost, on what ground or for what reason, is this mentioned here in particular, that they were made partakers of him, which, if his operations only be intended, seems to be expressed in the other instances?

Ans. 1. It is, as we observed before, no unusual thing in the Scripture, to express the same thing under various notions, the more effectually to impress a consideration and sense of it on our mind; especially where an expression hath a singular emphasis in it, as this hath here used: For, it is an exceeding aggravation of the sins of these apostates, that in these things they were partakers of the Holy Ghost.

2. As was before intimated also, this participation of the Holy Ghost, is placed it may be in the midst of the several parts of this description, as that whereon they do all depend, and they are all but instances of it. They were partakers of the Holy Ghost, in that they were once enlightened, and so of the rest.

3. It expresseth their own personal interest in these things. They had an interest in the things mentioned not only objectively, as they were proposed and presented to them in the church; but subjectively they themselves in

their own persons were made partakers of them. It is one thing for a man to have a share in, and benefit by the gifts of the church, another to be personally himself endowed with them.

4. To mind them in an especial manner of the privilege they enjoyed under the gospel, above what they had in their Judaism. For, whereas they had not then so much as heard that there was a Holy Ghost, that is, a blessed dispensation of him in spiritual gifts; Acts xix. 2. Now they themselves in their own persons were made partakers of him, than which there could be no greater aggravation of their apostacy: and we may observe in our way, that

The Holy Ghost is present with many as unto powerful operations, with whom he is not present as to gracious inhabitation: or, many are made partakers of him in his spiritual gifts, who are never made partakers of him in his saving graces; Matt. vii. 22, 23.

Fourthly, It is added in the description, that they had tasted καλὸν Θεοῦ ῥῆμα, 'The good word of God.' And we must inquire, 1. What is meant by the word of God: 2. How it is said to be good; and, 3. In what sense they taste of it.

1. Ῥῆμα is properly 'verbum dictum;' a word spoken; and although it be sometimes used in another sense by our apostle, and by him alone, chap. i. 3. xi. 3. where it denotes the effectual active power of God; yet both the signification of the word, and its principal use elsewhere, denote words spoken; and when applied unto God, his word as preached and declared. See Rom. x. 17. John vi. 68. The word of God, that is, the word of the gospel as preached, is that which they thus tasted of. But it may be said, that they enjoyed the word of God in their state of Judaism: they did so, as to the written word; for unto them were committed the oracles of God; Rom. iii. 2. But it is the word of God as preached in the dispensation of the gospel that is eminently thus called, and concerning which such excellent things are spoken; Rom. i. 16. Acts xx. 32. James i. 21.

2. This word is said to be καλὸν, 'good,' desirable, amiable, as the word here used signifieth. Wherein it is so, we shall see immediately. But whereas the word of

God preached under the dispensation of the gospel, may be considered two ways: (1.) In general, as to the whole system of truths contained therein; and, (2.) In especial, for the declaration made of the accomplishment of the promise in sending Jesus Christ for the redemption of the church; it is here especially intended in this latter sense. This is emphatically called ῥῆμα Κυρίου, 1 Pet. i. 25. So the promise of God in particular is called his 'good word;' Jer. xxix. 10. 'After seventy years I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you;' as he calls it the 'good thing' that he had promised, chap. xxxiii. 14. The gospel is the good tidings of peace and salvation by Jesus Christ; Isa. lii. 7.

3. Hereof they are said to taste, as they were before of the heavenly gift. The apostle as it were studiously keeps himself to this expression, on purpose to manifest that he intendeth not those who by faith do really receive, feed, and live on Jesus Christ, as tendered in the word of the gospel; John vi. 35. 49—51. 54, 55. It is as if he had said, I speak not of those who have received and digested the spiritual food of their souls, and turned it into spiritual nourishment; but of such as have so far tasted of it, as that they ought to have desired it as sincere milk to have grown thereby; but they had received such an experiment of its divine truth and power, as that it had various effects upon them. And for the farther explication of these words, and therein of the description of the state of these supposed apostates, we may consider the ensuing observations; which declare the sense of the words, or what is contained in them.

I. There is a goodness and excellency in the word of God, able to attract and affect the minds of men, who yet never arrive at sincere obedience unto it.

II. There is an especial goodness in the word of the promise, concerning Jesus Christ, and the declaration of its accomplishment.

For the first of these propositions, we may inquire what is that goodness, and wherein it doth consist; as also how apostatizing backsliders may taste thereof; which things tend to the explanation of the words, and what is designed by the apostle in them.

(1.) This goodness and excellency of the word of God

consists in its spiritual heavenly truth. All truth is beautiful and desirable; the perfection of the minds of men consists in the reception of it, and conformity unto it. And although true be one consideration of any thing, and good another, yet they are inseparable properties of the same subject. Whatever is true is also good. So are these things put together by the apostle; Phil. iv. 8. And as truth is good in itself, so is it in its effects on the minds of men; it gives them peace, satisfaction, and contentment. Darkness, errors, falsehood, are evils in themselves, and fill the minds of men with variety, uncertainty, superstition, dread, and bondage. It is truth that makes the soul free in any kind; John viii. 32. Now the word of God is the only pure, unmixed, and solid truth. 'Thy word is truth;' John xvii. 17. In most other things as to the best evidence attainable, men wander in the wilderness of endless conjectures. The truth of the word of God alone, is stable, firm, infallible, and which gives rest to the soul. As God is a 'God of truth,' Deut. xxxii. 4. the 'only true God,' John. xvii. 3. so he is, and he is alone essentially truth, and the eternal spring of it unto all other things. Hereof is this word the only revelation. How excellent, how desirable therefore must it needs be, and what a goodness to be preferred above all other things must it be accompanied withal! As it is infallible truth, giving light to the eyes and rest to the soul, it is the good word of God.

(2.) It is so in the matter of it, or the doctrines contained in it. As, [1.] The nature and properties of God are declared therein. God being only good, the only fountain and cause of all goodness, and in whose enjoyment all rest and blessedness doth consist, the revelation made of him, his nature and attributes, reflects a singular goodness on it; John xvii. 3. If it be incomparably better to know God, than to enjoy the whole world and all that is in it, that word must be good whereby he is revealed unto us; Jer. ix. 23, 24. [2.] It is exceeding good in the revelation of the glorious mystery of the Trinity, therein alone contained. This is that mystery the knowledge whereof is the only means to have a right apprehension of all other sacred truths; and without it, no one of them can be understood in a due manner, nor improved unto a due end. This is that alone which

will give true rest and peace to the soul. And there is not the meanest true believer in the world, who is exercised in faith and obedience, but he hath the power of this truth in and upon his mind, though he be not able to speak much of the notions of it. All grace and truth are built hereon, and do centre herein, and thence derive their first power and efficacy. Not one saving apprehension can we have of any gracious dispensation of God towards us, but it is resolved into the existence of God in trinity of persons, and the economy of their operations with respect unto us. It is a good word whereby that mystery is revealed. [3.] It is so in the revelation of the whole mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, with all the effects of infinite wisdom and grace thereunto belonging. What a satisfactory goodness this is accompanied withal, it is the most part of my business in this world to inquire and declare. [4.] It is so in the declaration of all the benefits of the mediation of Christ, in mercy, grace, pardon, justification, adoption, &c.

(3.) It is a good word with respect unto its blessed effects; Psal. xix. 7—9. Acts xx. 32. James i. 21. On this account the psalmist assures us, that it is 'more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold;' that it is 'sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb;' Psal. xix. 10. That is, there is an incomparable excellency, worth, and goodness in it. And he who discerns not this goodness in the word of God, is a stranger unto all real benefits by it.

2. How apostatizing persons do taste of this good word of God may be briefly declared. And their so doing hath respect unto the threefold property of it mentioned, whence it is denominated good: (1.) Its truth; (2.) Its subject-matter; (3.) Its effects.

And, (1.) They taste of it as it is true in the convictions they have thereof, in their knowledge in it, and acknowledgement of it. This gives (as it is the nature of truth to do) some serenity and satisfaction unto their minds, although they are not renewed thereby; John v. 35. They that heard John preach the truth, rejoiced in his light, as finding much present satisfaction therein. So was it with them; Luke iv. 22. John vii. 46. and others innumerable on the like occasion of hearing our Saviour preach. When men, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do escape the pollutions that are in the world

through lust, and them that live in error, they taste a goodness, a sweetness in the rest and satisfaction of their minds, so as that they suppose they are really possessed of the things themselves.

(2.) With respect unto the matter of the word, they have a taste of its goodness in the hopes which they have of their future enjoyment. Mercy, pardon, life, immortality, and glory, are all proposed in the good word of God. These upon those grounds which will fail them at last, they have such hopes to be made partakers of, as that they find a great relish and satisfaction therein, especially when they have relief thereby against their fears and convictions. For even in those ways wherein they deceive themselves, they have a taste of what sweetness and goodness there is in these things unto them by whom they are enjoyed. And as those who really believe and receive Jesus Christ in the word, do thereon 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Pet. i. 8. so those who only taste of the word, do feel in themselves a great complacency in their affections; Matt. xiii. 20. For,

(3.) By this taste they may receive many effects of the word on their minds and consciences, and therein have an experience of the word, as unto its power and efficacy. It belongs unto the exposition of the place to speak a little hereunto; and withal to declare what the difference is between them, and wherein this tasting comes short of that receiving and feeding on the word by faith, which is peculiar unto true believers.

[1.] This taste is accompanied, or it may be so, with delight, pleasure, and satisfaction in hearing of the word preached, especially where it is dispensed by any skilful master of the assemblies, who finds out acceptable words, or words of delight, which yet are upright and truth; Eccles. xii. 10, 11. So was it with those naughty Jews, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. with Herod, who heard John the Baptist gladly, finding delight and pleasure in his preaching. So was it with multitudes that pressed after Christ to hear the word; and so it is to be feared that it is with many in the days wherein we live.

[2.] It gives not only delight in hearing, but some joy in the things heard. Such are the hearers of the word whom *our* Saviour compared to the stony ground; they receive it

with joy, Matt. xiii. 20. as it was with the hearers of John the Baptist; John v. 35. The word, as tasted only, hath this effect on their minds, as that they shall rejoice in the things they hear; not with abiding solid joy, not with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but that which is temporary and evanid. And this ariseth from that satisfaction which they find in hearing of the good things declared; such are mercy, pardon, grace, immortality, and glory; they cannot but rejoice sometimes at the hearing of them, though they will not be at the pains of getting an interest in them.

[3.] The word only thus tasted of, will work on men a change and reformation of their lives, with a readiness unto the performance of many duties; 2 Pet. ii. 18. 20. Mark vi. 20. And,

[4.] What inward effects it may have on the minds and affections of men, in illumination, conviction, and humiliation, I have declared at large elsewhere. But all this while this is but tasting; the word of the gospel and Christ preached therein, is the food of our souls, and true faith doth not only taste it, but feed upon it, whereby it is turned into grace and spiritual nourishment in the heart. And hereunto is required; 1st. The laying it up, or treasuring of it in the heart; Luke i. 66. chap. ii. 19. No nourishment will ever be obtained by food, unless it be received into the stomach, where the means and causes of digestion and communication are placed. And if the word be not placed in the heart by fixed meditation and delight, it may please for a season, but it will not nourish the soul. 2dly. Food must be mixed and incorporated with the digestive humour, power, and faculty of the stomach, whereinsoever it consists, or it will not nourish. Give a man never so much food, if there be any noxious humour in the stomach hindering it from mixing itself with the means of digestion, it will no way profit him. And until the word in the heart be mixed and incorporated with faith, it will not advantage us; Heb. iv. 2. And there is nothing hereof where there is a taste of the word only. 3dly. Where men feed on the word, it is turned into a principle of life, spiritual strength, and growth within, which a taste of it only will not give. As food when it is digested, turns into flesh and blood and spirits; so doth the word and Christ therein unto the souls of men spiri-

tually. Hence Christ becometh our life, and liveth in us, as the efficient cause of our spiritual life; Gal. ii. 20. Col. iii. 3. and we grow and increase by the word; 1 Pet. ii. 2. A mere taste, though it may yield present refreshment, yet it communicates no abiding strength. Hence multitudes relish the word when it is preached, but never attain life, or strength, or growth by it. 4thly. The word received as it ought, will transform the soul into the likeness of God, who sends us this food to change our whole spiritual constitution, and to render our natures like unto his in righteousness and true holiness; Eph. iv. 21—24. 2 Cor. iii. 18. This a taste only will effect nothing towards. Nor, to conclude, will it give us such a love of the truth, as to abide by it in trials or temptations, 2 Thess. ii. 10. nor bring forth the fruits of it in universal obedience. And I might farther discourse from hence of the deplorable condition of them who satisfy their minds in mere notions of the truth, and empty speculations about it, without once attaining so much as a taste of the goodness of the word; of which sort there are many in the world; as also shew the necessity which all the hearers of the word lie under, of a severe scrutiny into their own souls, whether they do not rest in a taste only of the word, but come short of feeding upon it, and of Christ therein; but that I must not divert from the text. What hath been here spoken, was needful to declare the true state and condition of the persons spoken of. The second proposition mentioned, hath been treated of elsewhere.

Lastly, It is added, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος; 'and the powers of the world to come,' δυνάμεις are הגבורות or נפלאות; the mighty great miraculous operations and works of the Holy Ghost. What they were, and how they were wrought among these Hebrews, hath been declared in our exposition on chap. ii. 4. whither I refer the reader; and they are known from the Acts of the Apostles, where sundry instances of them are recorded. I have also proved on that chapter, that by the 'world to come,' our apostle in this epistle intends the days of the Messiah, that being the usual name of it in the church at that time, as the new world which God had promised to create. Wherefore, these powers of the world to come, were the gifts whereby those signs, wonders, and mighty works, were then wrought by the Holy Ghost, ac-

cording as it was foretold by the prophets, that they should be so. See Joel ii. compared with Acts ii. These the persons spoken of are supposed to have tasted; for the particle τε refers to γευσαμένους foregoing. Either they had been wrought in and by themselves, or by others in their sight, whereby they had an experience of the glorious and powerful working of the Holy Ghost in the confirmation of the gospel. Yea, I do judge, that themselves in their own persons were partakers of these powers in the gifts of tongues and other miraculous operations, which was the highest aggravation possible of their apostacy, and that which peculiarly rendered their recovery impossible. For there is not in the Scripture an impossibility put upon the recovery of any, but such as peculiarly sin against the Holy Ghost; and although that guilt may be otherwise contracted, yet in none so signally as this of rejecting that truth which was confirmed by his mighty operations in them that rejected it; which could not be done without an ascription of his divine power unto the devil. Yet would I not fix on those extraordinary gifts exclusively unto those that are ordinary. They also are of the powers of the world to come. So is every thing that belongs to the erection or preservation of the new world, or the kingdom of Christ. To the first setting up of a kingdom great and mighty power is required; but being set up, the ordinary dispensation of power will preserve it: so it is in this matter. The extraordinary miraculous gifts of the Spirit were used in the erection of Christ's kingdom, but it is continued by ordinary gifts, which therefore also belong unto the powers of the world to come.

From the consideration of this description in all the parts of it, we may understand what sort of persons it is, that is here intended by the apostle. And it appears, yea, is evident,

1. That the persons here intended, are not true and sincere believers in the strict and proper sense of that name, at least they are not described here as such, so that from hence nothing can be concluded concerning them that are so, as to the possibility of their total and final apostacy. For,(1.) There is in their full and large description no mention of faith or believing, either expressly or in terms equivalent. And in no other place of the Scripture are such intended, but they

are mentioned by what belongs essentially to their state. And, (2.) There is not any thing ascribed to these persons, that is peculiar to them as such, or discriminative of them, as taken either from their especial relation unto God in Christ, or any such property of their own, as is not communicable unto others. For instance, they are not said to be called according to God's purpose, to be born again not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God; not to be justified, or sanctified, or united unto Christ, or to be the sons of God by adoption, nor have they any other characteristical note of true believers ascribed to them. (3.) They are in the following verses compared to the ground on which the rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns and briers. But this is not so with true believers; for faith itself is an herb peculiar to the enclosed garden of Christ, and meet for him by whom we are dressed. (4.) The apostle discoursing afterward of true believers, doth in many particulars distinguish them from such as might be apostates, which is supposed of the persons here intended, as was in part before declared. For, [1.] He ascribes unto them in general better things and such as accompany salvation, as we observed, ver. 9. [2.] He ascribes unto them a work and labour of love, as it is true faith alone which worketh by love, ver. 10. whereof he speaks not one word concerning these. [3.] He asserts their preservation, 1st. On the account of the righteousness and faithfulness of God, ver. 11. 2dly. Of the immutability of his counsel concerning them; ver. 17, 18. In all these and sundry other instances doth he put a difference between these apostates and true believers. And whereas the apostle intends to declare the aggravation of their sin in falling away by the principal privileges whereof they were made partakers, here is not one word in name or thing of those which he expressly assigns to be the chief privileges of true believers; Rom. viii. 27—30.

2. Our next inquiry is more particularly whom he doth intend. And, (1.) they were such as not long before were converted from Judaism unto Christianity, upon the evidence of the truth of its doctrine, and the miraculous operations wherewith its dispensation was accompanied. (2.) He intends not the common sort of them but such as had obtained especial privileges among them. For they had received ex-

traordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as speaking with tongues, or working of miracles. And, (3.) They had found in themselves and others convincing evidences, that the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which they called the world to come, was come unto them, and had satisfaction in the glories of it. (4.) Such persons as these, as they have a work of light on their minds, so according unto the efficacy of their convictions may have such a change wrought upon their affections and in their conversation, as that they may be of great esteem among professors; and such these here intended might be. Now it must needs be some horrible frame of spirit, some malicious enmity against the truth and holiness of Christ and the gospel, some violent love of sin and the world, that could turn off such persons as these from the faith, and blot out all that light and conviction of truth, which they had received. But the least grace is a better security for heaven than the greatest gifts or privileges whatever.

These are the persons concerning whom our apostle discourseth, and of them it is supposed by him, that they may 'fall away,' καὶ παραπεσόντας. The especial nature of the sin here intended is afterward declared in two instances or aggravating circumstances. This word expresseth the respect it had to the state and condition of the sinners themselves; they 'fall away;' do that whereby they do so. I think we have well expressed the word, 'if they shall fall away.' Our old translations rendered it only 'if they shall fall,' which expressed not the sense of the word, and was liable unto a sense not at all intended. For he doth not say, if they shall fall into sin, this or that or any sin whatever that can be named; suppose the greatest sin imaginable, namely, the denial of Christ in the time of danger and persecution. This was that sin (as we intimated before) about which so many contests were raised of old, and so many canons were multiplied about the ordering of them who had contracted the guilt thereof. But one example well considered, had been a better guide for them than all their own arbitrary rules and imaginations. But Peter fell into this sin, and yet was renewed again to repentance, and that speedily. Wherefore, we may lay down this in the first place as to the sense of the words: there is no particular sin, that any man may fall into

occasionally through the power of temptation, that can cast the sinner under this commination, so that it should be impossible to renew him to repentance. It must therefore, secondly, be a course of sin, or sinning that is intended. But there are various degrees herein also, yea, there are divers kinds of such courses in sin. A man may so fall into a way of sin, as still to retain in his mind such a principle of light and conviction that may be suitable to his recovery. To exclude such from all hopes of repentance, is expressly contrary to Ezek. xviii. 21. Isa. lv. 7. yea, and the whole sense of the Scripture. Wherefore men, after some conviction and reformation of life, may fall into corrupt and wicked courses and make a long abode or continuance in them. Examples hereof we have every day amongst us, although it may be none to parallel that of Manasseh. Consider the nature of his education, under his father Hezekiah, the greatness of his sins, the length of his continuance in them, with his following recovery, and he is a great instance in this case. Whilst there is in such persons any seed of light or conviction of truth which is capable of an excitation or revival, so as to put forth its power and efficacy in their souls, they cannot be looked on to be in the condition intended, though their case be dangerous.

3. Our apostle makes a distinction between πταίω and πίπτω, Rom. xi. 11. between 'stumbling' and 'falling,' and would not allow that the unbelieving Jews of those days were come so far as πίπτειν, that is, to fall absolutely; λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσι; μὴ γένοιτο. 'I say, then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid:' that is, absolutely and irrecoverably. So therefore doth that word signify in this place. And παραπίπτω increaseth the signification, either as to perverseness in the manner of the fall, or as to violence in the fall itself.

From what hath been discoursed, it will appear, what falling away it is that the apostle here intendeth. And,

(1.) It is not a falling into this or that actual sin, be it of what nature it will, which may be, and yet not be a 'falling away.'

(2.) It is not a falling upon temptation or surprisal, for concerning such fallings we have rules of another kind given us in sundry places, and those exemplified in especial in-

stances; but it is that which is premeditated, of deliberation and choice.

(3.) It is not a falling by relinquishment or renunciation of some though very material principles of Christian religion, by error or seduction, as the Corinthians fell, in denying the resurrection of the dead, and the Galatians by denying justification by faith in Christ alone. Wherefore,

(4.) It must consist in a total renunciation of all the constituent principles and doctrines of Christianity, whence it is denominated. Such was the sin of them who relinquished the gospel to return unto Judaism as it was then stated, in opposition unto it and hatred of it. This it was, and not any kind of actual sins, that the apostle manifestly discourseth concerning.

(5.) For the completing of this falling away, according to the intention of the apostle, it is required that this renunciation be avowed and professed; as, when a man forsaketh the profession of the gospel, and falls into Judaism, or Mahometanism, or Gentilism, in persuasion and practice. For the apostle discourseth concerning faith and obedience as professed, and so therefore also of their contraries. And this avowment of a relinquishment of the gospel hath many provoking aggravations attending it. And yet whereas some men may in their hearts and minds utterly renounce the gospel, but upon some outward secular considerations either dare not or will not profess that inward renunciation, their falling away is complete and total in the sight of God; and all they do to cover their apostacy in an external compliance with Christian religion, is in the sight of God but a mocking of him, and the highest aggravation of their sin.

This is the 'falling away' intended by the apostle; a voluntary resolved relinquishment of, and apostacy from, the gospel, the faith, rule, and obedience thereof, which cannot be without casting the highest reproach and contumely imaginable upon the person of Christ himself, as it is afterward expressed.

Concerning these persons and their thus 'falling away,' two things are to be considered in the text: 1. What is affirmed of them; 2. The reason of that affirmation.

The first is, That it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. The thing intended is negative; to renew

them again to repentance, this is denied of them; but the modification of that negation turns the proposition into an affirmation, It is impossible so to do.

Ἀδυνάτον γὰρ. The importance of this word is dubious; some think an absolute, and others only a moral impossibility is intended thereby. This latter most fix upon, so that it is a matter rare, difficult, and seldom to be expected, that is intended, and not that which is absolutely impossible. Considerable reasons and instances are produced for either interpretation. But we must look farther into the meaning of it.

(1.) All future events depend on God, who alone doth necessarily exist. Other things may be or may not be as they respect him or his will. And so things that are future may be said to be impossible, or be so, either with respect unto the nature of God, or his decrees, or his moral rule, order, and law. Things are impossible with respect unto the nature of God, either absolutely as being inconsistent with his being and essential properties; so it is impossible that God should lie: or on some supposition; so it is impossible that God should forgive sin without satisfaction, on the supposition of his law, and the sanction of it. In this sense the repentance of these apostates it may be is not impossible. I say, it may be; it may be there is nothing in it contrary to any essential properties of the nature of God, either directly or reductively. But I will not be positive herein. For the things ascribed unto these apostates are such, namely, their crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame, as that I know not but that it may be contrary to the holiness, and righteousness, and glory of God, as the supreme ruler of the world, to have any more mercy on them than on the devils themselves, or those that are in hell. But I will not assert this to be the meaning of the place.

(2.) Again, Things possible in themselves, and with respect unto the nature of God, are rendered impossible by God's decree and purpose; he hath absolutely determined, that they shall never be. So it was impossible that Saul and his posterity should be preserved in the kingdom of Israel. It was not contrary to the nature of God, but God had decreed that it should not be; 1 Sam. xv. 28, 29. But the decrees of God respecting persons in particular, and not qualifica-

tions in the first place, they cannot be here intended; because they are free acts of his will, not revealed neither in particular, nor by virtue of any general rule, as they are sovereign acts making differences between persons in the same condition; Rom. ix. 11, 12. What is possible or impossible with respect unto the nature of God, we may know in some good measure from the certain knowledge we may have of his being and essential properties. But what is so one way or other with respect unto his decrees or purposes, which are sovereign free acts of his will, knoweth no man, not the angels in heaven; Isa. xl. 13, 14. Rom. xi. 34.

(3.) Things are possible or impossible with respect unto the rule and order of all things that God hath appointed. When in things of duty God hath neither expressly commanded them, nor appointed means for the performance of them, then are we to look upon them as impossible, and then with respect unto us they are so absolutely, and so to be esteemed. And this is the impossibility here principally intended. It is a thing that God hath neither commanded us to endeavour, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promised to assist us in it. It is therefore that which we have no reason to look after, attempt, or expect, as being not possible by any law, rule, or constitution of God.

The apostle instructs us no farther in the nature of future events, but as our own duty is concerned in them. It is not for us either to look, or hope, or pray for, or endeavour the renewal of such persons unto repentance. God gives law unto us in these things, not unto himself. It may be possible with God for aught we know, if there be not a contradiction in it unto any holy properties of his nature; only he will not have us to expect any such things from him, nor hath he appointed any means for us to endeavour it. What he shall do we ought thankfully to accept; but our own duty towards such persons is absolutely at an end. And indeed they put themselves wholly out of our reach.

That which is said to be thus impossible with respect unto these persons, is, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, 'to renew them again to repentance.' Μετάνοια, in the New Testament, with respect unto God, signifies a 'gracious change of mind' on gospel principles and promises, leading the

whole soul into conversion unto God. תשובה. This is the beginning and entrance of our turning to God, without which neither the will nor the affections will be engaged unto him, nor is it possible for sinners to find acceptance with them.

It is impossible, ἀνακαινίζειν, 'to renew.' The construction of the words is defective, and must be supplied; σέ may be added, to renew 'themselves,' it is not possible they should do so; or, τίνας, that 'some' should, that any should renew them; and this I judge to be intended. For the impossibility mentioned respects the duty and endeavours of others. In vain shall any attempt their recovery by the use of any means whatever. And we must inquire what it is to be renewed, and what it is to be renewed again.

Now our ἀνακαινισμὸς is the renovation of the image of God in our natures, whereby we are dedicated again unto him. For as we had lost the image of God by sin, and were separated from him as things profane, this ἀνακαινισμὸς respects both the restoration of our nature and the dedication of our persons to God; and it is twofold.

First, Real and internal in regeneration and effectual sanctification. 'The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;' Tit. iii. 5. 1 Thess. v. 23. But this is not that which is here intended. For this these apostates never had, and so cannot be said to be renewed again unto it. For no man can be renewed again unto that which he never had.

Secondly, It is outward in the profession and pledge of it. Wherefore renovation in this sense consists in the solemn confession of faith and repentance by Jesus Christ, with the seal of baptism received thereon. For thus it was with all those who were converted unto the gospel. Upon their profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, they received the baptismal pledge of an inward renovation, though really they were not partakers thereof. But this estate was their ἀνακαινισμὸς; their renovation. From this state they fell totally, renouncing him who is the author of it, his grace which is the cause of it, and the ordinance which is the pledge thereof.

Hence it appears what it is, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν, 'to renew them again.' It is to bring them again into this state of

profession by a second renovation, and a second baptism as a pledge thereof. This is determined impossible, and so unwarrantable for any to attempt. And for the most part such persons do openly fall into such blasphemies against, and engage (if they have power) into such persecution of the truth, as that they give themselves sufficient direction how others should behave themselves towards them. So the ancient church was satisfied in the case of Julian. This is the sum of what is affirmed concerning these apostates, namely, That it is impossible to renew them unto repentance; that is, so to act towards them as to bring them to that repentance whereby they may be instated in their former condition.

Hence sundry things may be observed for the clearing of the apostle's design in this discourse. As,

1. Here is nothing said concerning the acceptance or refusal of any upon repentance or the profession thereof after any sin, to be made by the church, whose judgment is to be determined by other rules and circumstances. And this perfectly excludes the pretence of the Novatians from any countenance in these words. For whereas they would have drawn their warranty from hence for the utter exclusion from church communion of all those who had denied the faith in times of persecution, although they expressed a repentance whose sincerity they could not evince; those only are intended, who neither do nor can come to repentance itself, nor make a profession of it, with whom the church had no more to do. It is not said that men who ever thus fell away, shall not upon their repentance be admitted again into their former state in the church; but, that such is the severity of God against them, that he will not again give them repentance unto life.

2. Here is nothing that may be brought in bar against such as having fallen by any great sin, or any course in sinning, and that after light, convictions, and gifts received and exercised, who desire to repent of their sins and endeavour after sincerity therein. Yea, such a desire and endeavour exempts any one from the judgment here threatened.

There is therefore in it that which tends greatly to the encouragement of such sinners. For, whereas it is here declared concerning those who are thus rejected of God,

that it is impossible to renew them, or to do any thing towards them that shall have a tendency unto repentance; those who are not satisfied that they do yet savingly repent, but only are sincerely exercised how they may attain thereunto, have no concernment in this commination, but evidently have the door of mercy still opened unto them. For it is shut only against those who shall never endeavour to turn by repentance. And although persons so rejected of God, may fall under convictions of their sin attended with despair, which is unto them a foresight of their future condition; yet as unto the least attempt after repentance on the terms of the gospel, they do never rise up unto it. Wherefore the impossibility intended, of what sort soever it be, respects the severity of God, not in refusing or rejecting the greatest sinners which seek after and would be renewed unto repentance, which is contrary unto innumerable of his promises; but in the giving up such sinners as these are here mentioned unto that obdurateness and obstinacy in sinning, that blindness of mind, and hardness of heart, as that they neither will nor shall ever sincerely seek after repentance, nor may any means according to the mind of God be used to bring them thereunto. And the righteousness of the exercise of this severity is taken from the nature of this sin or what is contained in it, which the apostle declares in the ensuing instances. And we may in our passage observe, that

In the preaching of the gospel, it is necessary to propose unto men, and to insist on the severity of God, in dealing with provoking sinners against it. And indeed the severity of God is principally, though not solely, exercised with respect unto sins against the gospel. This our apostle calls us to the consideration of, in the case of the unbelieving Jews, Rom. xi. 22. Ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ· ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομίαν· 'Behold the goodness and severity of God: towards them that fell' (those in the text), 'severity.' Ἀποτομία, is a sharp dissection or cutting off. I do not therefore understand by it an essential property of the nature of God. It is not the same with his holiness, righteousness, or vindictive justice. These are essential properties of the divine nature, whence it is that he neither will nor can absolutely suffer men to

sin, and let them go for ever unpunished without any satisfaction or atonement made for their sins, whereof we have treated elsewhere. But by God's 'severity' is intended the free act of his will, acting according unto those properties of his nature in an eminent manner, when and how he pleaseth. And therefore into them it is resolved. So our apostle, when he would intimate this severity unto us to ingenerate in us a holy fear and reverence of God in his worship, adds as his motive, 'for our God is a consuming fire;' Heb. xii. 29. That is, of an infinitely pure, holy, righteous nature, according to which he will deal with us, and so may unexpectedly break forth upon us in severity if we labour not for grace to 'serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' Wherefore this severity of God is his exemplary dealing with provoking sinners according to the exigence of his holiness and wisdom, without an interposition of longer patience or forbearance. There are some sins or degrees in sinning, that neither the holiness, nor majesty, nor wisdom of God can so bear withal, as to suffer them to pass unpunished or unremarked on in this world. In such cases is God said to exercise his severity. And he doth so,

1. In extraordinary outward judgments upon open profligate sinners, especially the enemies of his church and glory. Hence on such an occasion doth God give that description of himself, Nahum i. 2. 'God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.' When God acteth towards his adversaries according to the description here given of himself, he deals with them in severity. And two things are required to make these judgments of God against his adversaries in this world to be instances thereof. (1.) That they be unusual, such as do not commonly and frequently fall out in the ordinary dispensation of divine Providence; Numb. xvi. 29, 30. God doth not in the government of the world suffer any thing to fall out or come to pass that in the issue shall be contrary to his justice, or inconsistent with his righteousness. But yet he beareth with things so for the most part, as that he will manifest himself to be ex-

ceedingly full of patience and long-suffering, as also to exercise the faith of them that believe in the expectation of a future judgment. Wherefore there must be somewhat extraordinary in those judgments wherein God will exercise and manifest severity. So it is expressed, Isa. xxviii. 21. 'The Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.' The work he will do is his work, but it is his strange work; that is, not strange from or opposite unto his nature, for so he will do nothing; but that which is unusual, which he doth but seldom, and is therefore marvellous. Thus in sudden destructions of persecutors or persons of a flagitious wickedness, in great desolations of provoking families, cities, and nations, in fire from heaven, in inundations, plagues, earthquakes, and such sudden extraordinary consuming judgments, God giveth instances of his severity in the world; Rom. i. 18. (2.) In this case it is required that such judgments be open, visible, and manifest both unto those who are punished, and to others who wisely consider them. So God speaketh of himself, Deut. vii. 10. 'God that repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them; he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.' That is, he will do it openly and manifestly, that themselves and all others shall take notice of his severity therein. This I say is one way whereby God acts his severity in this world. And hereby he poureth everlasting contempt upon the security of his proudest and haughtiest adversaries. For when they think they have sufficiently provided for their own safety, and stopped all avenues of evil according to the rules of their policy and wisdom with the best observations they are able to make of the ordinary effects of his providence, and so give up themselves to take satisfaction in their lusts and pleasures, he breaks in upon them with an instance and example of his severity to their utter destruction. So when they say, 'Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape;' 1 Thess. v. 3. This will be the state one day of the whole Babylonish interest in the world; Rev. xviii.

7. 9. But this is not directly intended in this place; although even this effect of God's severity overtook these apostates afterward.

2. In spiritual judgments. By these God in his severity leaveth unprofitable, provoking, and apostate professors under the impossibility here intended of being renewed unto repentance. And this is the sorest of all God's judgments. There is in it a sentence of eternal damnation denounced on men aforehand in this world. So our apostle tells us, 'Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment;' 1 Tim. v. 24. God so passeth judgment concerning them in this world, as that there shall be no alteration in their state and condition to eternity. And this severity of God towards sinners under the gospel, shutting them up under final impenitency, consists in these four things:

(1.) God puts an end unto all his expectation concerning them: he looks for no more from them, and so exerciseth no more care about them. Whilst God is pleased to afford the use of means for conversion and repentance unto any, he is said to look for and expect answerable fruits; I did (saith he) so to my vineyard, 'and I looked that it should bring forth grapes;' Isa. v. 2. 4. Wherefore when God takes away all means of grace and repentance from any, then he puts an end unto his own expectation of any fruits: for if a man can have no fruit from his vineyard whilst he dresseth it, or his field whilst he tilleth it, he will never look for any after he hath given them up and laid them waste. And on the other side, when he utterly ceaseth to look for any fruit from them, he will till them no more; for why should he put himself to charge or trouble to no purpose? Woe unto the souls of men, when God in this sense looks for no more at their hands; that is, when he puts an end unto that patience or long-suffering towards them from whence all supplies of the means of conversion and repentance do arise and spring. This God doth by some, and that in such ways as we shall afterward declare.

(2.) God will actually punish them with, or inflict on them hardness of heart and blindness of mind, that they never shall repent or believe. John xii. 39, 40. 'Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias said again, He hath

blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.' God will now judicially blind them and harden them, and by one means or other every thing that befalls them shall promote their induration. So it was with these Jews; the doctrine of Christ filled them with envy, his holiness with malice, and his miracles with rage and madness. Their table was a snare to them, and that which should have been for their good turned to their hurt. So is it with all them whom God in his severity hardeneth. Whether the outward means be continued unto them or no, all is one, every thing shall drive them farther from God, and increase their obstinacy against him. From hence they become scoffers and persecutors, avowedly scorning and hating the truth. And herein it may be they shall please themselves until they are swallowed up in despair or the grave.

(3.) God usually in his severity gives them up unto sensual lusts. So he dealt with the idolaters of old; he 'gave them up unto vile affections,' Rom. i. 26. such as those there described by the apostle; and in the pursuit of them, 'gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do the things that are not convenient;' ver. 28. Whence they were 'filled with all unrighteousness;' ver. 29. So doth God frequently deal with apostates from the gospel, or from the principal truths of it, unto idolatry and superstition. And when they are engaged in the pursuit of these lusts, especially when they are judicially given up unto them, they are held assuredly as under cords and chains unto final impenitency.

(4.) God gave such persons up unto Satan to be blinded, and led by him into pernicious delusions. 'Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness;' 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. This was the state and condition of the persons here prophesied of: the truth of the gospel was preached unto them, and for some time professed by them. They received the truth, but they received not the love of it, so as to comply with it and improve it unto its proper end. This kept them barren and unprofitable under their profession. For

where the truth is not loved, as well as believed or assented unto, it will bring forth no fruits. But this was not all; they had pleasure in their sins, lusts, and unrighteousness, resolving not to part with them on any terms. Whereas therefore these are all of them absolutely and without limitation judged and condemned by the truth of the gospel, they began to dislike and secretly to hate the truth itself. But whereas together with their lusts and unrighteousness wherein they had pleasure, they found a necessity of a religion one or other, or the pretence of some religion or other to give them countenance against the truth which they rejected, they were in a readiness to any thing that should offer itself unto them. In this condition in the way of punishment, and as a revenge of their horrible ingratitude and contempt of his gospel, God gives them up to the power of Satan, who blinds, deludes, and deceives them with such efficacy, as that they shall not only readily embrace, but obstinately believe and adhere to, the lies, errors, and falsehoods that he shall suggest unto them. And this is the way and course whereby so many carnal gospellers are turned off unto Romish idolatry every day.

Other instances of the severity of God on this occasion might be given; but these are fully sufficient to declare the manner of his dealing with such as those described in the text, whence it follows, that their renovation unto repentance is impossible. For what hopes or expectations should we have concerning such as God hath utterly forsaken, whom he hath judicially smitten with blindness and hardness of heart, whom he hath given up not only to the power and efficacy of their own lusts and vile affections, but also immediately unto Satan to be deluded, and led captive at his pleasure? In vain shall the repentance of such persons be either expected or endeavoured.

And this severity of God ought to be preached and insisted on in the declaration of the gospel. Let the reader consult what hath been already offered concerning the use of gospel threatenings and comminations, on the third and fourth chapters. There is a proneness in corrupted nature to 'despise the riches of the goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering of God, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance,' and thereon 'after their hardness

and impenitent heart treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath,' as our apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 4, 5. Considering nothing in God but mercy and long-suffering, and nothing in the gospel but grace and pardon, they are ready to despise and turn them into lasciviousness, or from them both to countenance themselves in their sins. By this means, on such mistaken apprehensions, suited to their lusts and corrupt inclinations, heightened by the craft of Satan, do multitudes under the preaching of the gospel harden themselves daily to destruction. And others there are, who although they will not on such wicked pretences give up themselves to their lusts and carnal affections, yet, for want of constant vigilancy and watchfulness, are apt to have sloth and negligence, with many ill frames of spirit, to increase and grow upon them. Both sorts are to be stirred up by being put in mind of this severity of God. They are to be taught that there are secret powers accompanying the dispensation of the gospel, continually in a readiness to 'revenge all disobedience;' 2 Cor. x. 6. That God is not mocked, but 'whatsoever a man soweth, that he shall also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, of the flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting;' Gal. vi. 7, 8. But I have elsewhere already shewed the necessity there was of arming the gospel with threatenings, as well as confirming of it with promises, so as that it may not be here again at large insisted on.

From what hath been discoursed, it is evident how necessary and wholesome a warning or threatening is here expressed by the apostle. It is the open mistakes of men that have drawn undue entanglements out of it; in itself it is both plain and necessary. Shall we be afraid to say, that God will not renew such sinners as those before described unto repentance? or to declare unto sinners, that without repentance they cannot be saved? or shall we preach to men, that whatever light they have had, whatever gifts they have received, whatever privileges they have been made partakers of, whatever profession they have made, or for how long a season soever; if they fall totally and despitefully from the gospel into that which is most opposite both to its truth and holiness, yet there is no doubt, but they may again re-

pent and be saved? God forbid so great a wickedness should fall from our mouths. Nay, we are to warn all persons in danger of such apostacies, that 'if any one so draw back, God's soul will have no pleasure in him;' that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;' that he will harden such sinners, and give them up to strong delusions that they may be damned; that he is not under the engagement of any promise to give them repentance, but hath rather given many severe threatenings to the contrary. He hath told us, that such persons are as 'trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots,' of which there is no hope; 'that denying the Lord that bought them, they bring on themselves swift destruction, whose damnation slumbereth not;' with the like declarations of severity against them innumerable.

But what shall be said unto them, who having through great temptations, and it may be fears and surprisals, for a season renounced the gospel; or such as by reason of great sins against light, and backsliding in profession, do apprehend themselves to be fallen into this condition, and yet are greatly desirous of a recovery, and do cry to God for repentance and acceptance? I answer as before, they are not at all concerned in this text. Here is nothing excluding them from acceptance with God and eternal salvation, be they who or what they will that seek it by repentance; only there are some who are excluded by God, and do obstinately shut up themselves from all endeavours after repentance itself, with whom we have not any thing to do.

It is true, those alone are here firstly and directly intended, who in those days had received extraordinary or miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. But this by just analogy may be extended unto others, now those gifts are ceased in the church. For those gifts and privileges which are yet continued unto men do lay (in present circumstances) the same obligation upon them unto perseverance in profession, and give the same aggravation unto their apostacy, as did those extraordinary gifts formerly conferred upon profession. 'Let us not then be high-minded but fear.' It is not good approaching too near a precipice. Let unprofitable hearers and backsliders in heart and ways be awaked, lest they may be nearer falling under God's severity than they are aware

of. But we must return unto our apostle giving an account of the nature of this sin which is attended with so sore a judgment. And this he doth in a double instance.

Ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Beza affirms that ἑαυτοῖς, 'to themselves,' is absent from some copies, and then the words may admit of a sense diverse from that which is commonly received. For ἀνασταροῦντας, 'crucifying again,' may refer unto τίνας included and supposed in ἀνακαινίζειν, that some or any should renew them. It is impossible that any should renew them to repentance; for this cannot be done without crucifying the Son of God again, since these apostates have utterly rejected all interest in, and benefit by, his death, as once undergone for sinners. This none can do; we ought not, we cannot crucify Christ again, that they may be renewed and saved. Who can entertain a thought tending towards a desire that so it might be? And this sense in the same or an alike case the apostle plainly expresseth, chap. x. 26, 27. 'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.' Christ cannot be offered again, and so crucified again, without which the sins of such persons cannot be expiated. For the unbloody sacrificing of Christ every day in the mass was not as yet invented; and it is a relief fit only for them to trust unto, who have no interest in that sacrifice which he offered once for all. But there is in that other place an allusion to the sacrifices under the law. Because they could legally expiate no sins but what were past before their offering, they were to be frequently repeated upon reiterated sinning. So from time to time they sinned (as no man liveth and sinneth not), and had sacrifices renewed for their sins, applied unto the particular sins they had committed. This could now be so no more, Christ being once offered for sin, whoever loseth his interest in that one offering, and forfeiteth the benefit of it, there is no more sacrifice for him; 'Christ henceforth dieth no more.' It cannot be hence imagined that the grace of the gospel is restrained, as being all confined unto that one sacrifice, from what was represented in the multiplied sacrifices of the law.

For, 1. The one sacrifice of Christ extended farther, as to sins and persons, than all those of the law with all their repetitions put together. 'By him all that believe are jus-

tified from those things which they could not be justified from by the law of Moses;' Acts xiii. 39. There were some sins under the law for which no sacrifice was provided, seeing he who was guilty of them was to die without mercy; as in the cases of murder and adultery, with respect whereunto David saith, 'Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering;' Psal. li. 16. namely, in such cases as his then was.

But, 2. In case of apostacy from the one and the other, the event was the same. There was under the law no sacrifice appointed for him who had totally apostatized from its fundamental principles, or sinned ביד חזקה, 'presumptuously,' with a hand high and stubborn. This was that despising of Moses' law, for which those that were guilty thereof, 'were to die without mercy;' Heb. x. 28. And so it is under the gospel. Wilful apostates forfeiting all their interest in the sacrifice of Christ, there is no relief appointed for them, but God will cut them off and destroy them; as shall, God willing, be declared on that place. And this may be the sense of the words, supposing ἑαυτοῖς not to belong originally unto this place. God hath confined all hopes of mercy, grace, and salvation unto the one single offering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This our apostle insisteth on and presseth, chap. ix. 25—28. x. 12. 14. Infinite wisdom and sovereign pleasure hath centred all grace, mercy, and blessedness in him alone; John i. 14. 16, 17. Acts iv. 12. Col. i. 19. And this 'one offering' of his is so sufficient and effectually powerful unto all that by faith seek an interest therein, that this restraint is no restraint; nor hath any sinner the least cause to complain of it. If they reject and despise it, it is their own fault, and at their own peril. Nor is it the reiterated sacrifice of the mass, or whatever else they may betake themselves unto, that will afford them any relief.

But the word is constant enough in ancient copies to maintain its own station, and the context requires its continuance. And this makes the work of 'crucifying again,' to be the act of the apostates themselves, and to be asserted, as that which belongs unto their sin, and not denied as belonging to a relief from their sin. 'They crucify him again to themselves.' They do it not really, they cannot do so;

but they do it to themselves morally. This is in their sin of falling away, part of it comprised in it, which renders it unpardonable; they again crucify the Son of God, not absolutely, but in and to themselves.

And we must inquire how they did it, or in what sense it is by the apostle charged on them. Now this (to omit all other things that may be thought to concur herein) was,

1. Principally by an accession in suffrage unto them who had crucified him once before. Hereby they went over the same work with them, and did that for their own parts, which the others had done before for theirs. They approved of and justified the fact of the Jews in crucifying him as a malefactor. For there is no medium between these things: The Lord Christ must be esteemed to be the Son of God, and consequently his gospel to be indispensably obeyed, or be supposed to be justly crucified, as a seducer, a blasphemer, and a malefactor. For professing himself to be the Son of God, and witnessing that confession unto his death, he must be so received, or rejected as an evil doer. And this was done by these apostates; for, going over to the Jews, they approved of what they had done in crucifying of him as such a one.

2. They did it by declaring that having made trial of him, his gospel, and ways, they found nothing of substance, truth, or goodness in them, for which they should continue their profession. Thus that famous or infamous apostate Julian the emperor gave this as the motto of his apostacy, Ἀνέγνων, ἔγνων, κατέγνων, 'I have read, known, and condemned' your gospel. And this hath been the way of apostates in all ages. In the primitive times they were the Gentiles' intelligencers, and like the spies of old brought up a false report upon the land. For they were not satisfied, for the most part, to declare their disapprobation of what was really taught, believed, and practised among the Christians, but the more to countenance their apostacy, not only invidiously represented and odiously traduced what was really professed, but withal invented lies and calumnies about conspiracies, seditions, and inconsistencies with public peace among them, so, if it were possible, to ruin the whole interest and all that belonged unto it. This is to crucify Christ afresh, and to put him to open shame. And such is the manner of them unto this day. If any have made an ac-

cession to the more intimate duties of religion, as prayer and preaching by virtue of spiritual gifts, with other acts of mutual spiritual communion, which the generality of men concern not themselves in; when, in compliance with their occasions and temptations, they fall from them and renounce them; they aim at nothing more than by malicious scurrilous representations of them, and false additions unto them of things perverse or ridiculous, to expose them to open shame and ignominy. Their language is, ἀνέγνωμεν, ἔγνωμεν, κατέγνωμεν; 'we have known and tried these things, and declare their folly;' so hoping to be believed, because of their pretended experience, which alone is sufficient to render them suspected with all persons of wisdom and sobriety. Now no man living can attempt a higher dishonour against Jesus Christ, in his person, or in any of his ways, than openly to profess, that upon trial of them they find nothing in them for which they should be desired. But it had been better for such persons, 'not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn aside from the holy commandment delivered unto them.'

And this is the first aggravation of the sins mentioned, taken from the act ascribed unto the sinners; they 'crucify him again,' they do it as much as in them lieth, and declare that they would actually do it, if it were in their power. He adds another, from the consideration of the person who was thus treated by them. It was the Son of God, whom they dealt thus withal. This they did, not when he had 'emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation,' so that it was not an easy matter to look through all the veils of his outward weakness and condition in this world, to 'behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father,' in which state he was crucified by the Jews; but now when he had been declared to be 'the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' And his divinity was variously attested unto in the world, and among themselves; and this is the great aggravation of sin against the gospel, namely, of unbelief, that it is immediately against 'the Son of God.' His person is despised in it, both absolutely and in the discharge of all his offices. And therefore is God himself so, because he hath nothing to do with us but by his Son.

Secondly, The apostle adds, as another aggravation of their sin, καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας, 'exposing him again to public ignominy or shame.' Παραδειγματίζω, is to bring any supposed offenders unto such open punishment as is shameful in the eyes of men, and renders them vile who are so traduced and punished. The word is but once more used in the New Testament, namely, Matt. i. 19. where it is spoken of Joseph in reference unto his espoused wife the holy Virgin; μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν παραδειγματίσαι, 'not willing to make her a public example;' that is, by bringing of her forth unto a shameful punishment for the terror of others.

According unto this sense our apostle, expressing the death of Christ as inflicted by men, reduces the evils that accompanied it unto two heads: (1.) The pain of it; and, (2.) The shame: chap. xii. 2. 'He endured the cross and despised the shame.' For as the death of the cross was penal, or painful and dolorous, so in the manner of it, in all its circumstances of time, place, person, it was most highly shameful. He was in it παραδειγματισθεὶς, 'ignominiously traduced,' or put to open shame; yea, the death of the cross amongst all people was peculiarly shameful. Thus in calling over his death in this place, he refers it unto the same heads of suffering and shame; crucifying him, and putting him to open shame. And in this latter he was not spared by these apostates no more than in the former, so far as it lay in their power.

And hence we may raise a sufficient answer unto an objection of no small importance, that ariseth against our exposition of this place. For it may be said, That if those, or many of them, or any of them, who actually and really crucified the Son of God in his own person, and put him to open shame, did yet obtain mercy and pardon of that and all other sins, as it is confessed they did; whence is it that those who renounce him, and do so crucify him and put him to shame only metaphorically and to themselves, should be excluded from all hopes of repentance and pardon?

I answer, That the sin of those who forsake Christ and the gospel after their conviction of its truth, and profession of it, is on many accounts far greater than that of those who crucified him in the days of his flesh: and there are sundry reasons whereon God will exercise more se-

verity towards this latter sort of sinners than towards the former.

1. The sin is greater, because no way to be extenuated by ignorance. This is everywhere allowed, as that which made the sin of crucifying of Christ pardonable upon their repentance, and their repentance possible. So Peter, in his sermon to them, lays down this as the foundation of his exhortation unto repentance. 'And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers;' Acts iii. 17. 'Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,' 1 Cor. ii. 8. which our apostle pleads also in his own case, 1 Tim. i. 13. This put their sins among the number of those which sacrifices were allowed for of old, and which fell under the care of him who knows how to have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way.

But it may be inquired, How they could be excused by ignorance, who had so many means and evidences of conviction as to the truth of his person, that he was the Messiah; and of his doctrine, that it was from heaven? For besides the concurrent testimony of Moses and the prophets given unto him, the holiness of his person and life, the efficacy of his doctrine, and the evidence of his miracles, did abundantly prove and confirm the truth of those things; so that they could be no otherwise ignorant but by wilful obstinacy.

Ans. 1. These were indeed such means of conviction, as that their sin and unbelief against them had no real excuse; as himself everywhere expresseth; John xv. 22. xii. 47, 48. x. 36—38. 2. Nothing is allowed unto this ignorance, but that it left their repentance possible, and their sin pardonable. 3. This it will do, until God hath used all the means of conviction which he intendeth, and no longer. This as yet he had not done. He had yet two farther testimonies unto the truth, which he would graciously afford. (1.) His resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4. which was always afterward pleaded as the principal evidence of God's approbation of him. (2.) The effusion of the Holy Spirit in his miraculous operations; Acts ii. 32, 33. v. 32. 1 Tim. iii. 16. But where at any time God hath granted all the means of conviction that he pleaseth, be they ordinary or extraordinary, if they are rejected, there is no hope; Luke xvi. 29—31.

On the other side, this sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel after profession is absolutely wilful, and with a high hand, against all the light and conviction that God will give of the truth unto any of the children of men in this world.

2. These persons had an experience of the truth, goodness, and excellency of the gospel, which those others had not, nor could have; for they had 'tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,' and had received great satisfaction in the things they were convinced of, as was before at large declared. Wherefore in their rejection of him and them, an unconquerable hatred and malice must be granted to be predominant. And let men take heed what they do when they begin to sin against their own experience, for evil lies at the door.

3. In and under the crucifying of the Lord Christ, God had yet a design of mercy and grace to be communicated unto men by the dispensation of his Spirit. Therefore there was a way set open unto those who were guilty of that sin, to repentance and pardon. But now having made use of this also, that being sinned against, there is no place left for any thing but severity. Wherefore,

4. There was in the sin of these persons 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.' For they had received in themselves, or seen in others, those mighty operations of his whereby he gave attestation unto Christ and the gospel. Therefore they could not renounce the Lord Christ, without an ascription of these works of the Holy Ghost unto the devil, which the devil acted them unto. So saith our apostle, 'No man speaking by the Holy Ghost, calleth Jesus' anathema, or 'accursed;' 1 Cor. xii. 3. To call him anathema, is to declare and avow that he was justly crucified as an accursed person, as a public pest. This was done by these persons who went over to the Jews, in approbation of what they had done against him. This no man can do speaking by the Holy Ghost. That is, whosoever doth so, is acted by the spirit of the devil; and if he have known the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the contrary, he doth it in despite of him, which renders the sin irremissible.

CHAP. II.

Partial apostacy from the gospel. Pretences of the church of Rome against the charge of this evil, examined and rejected.

APOSTACY from the gospel is either total or partial. Of the former we have treated in a high and signal instance. When men wilfully and maliciously (for they cannot do it wilfully but they must do it maliciously) renounce Jesus Christ as a seducer and malefactor, going over in their suffrage unto the Jews by whom he was crucified, they enter into that part of hell and darkness which properly constitutes this sin. It were well for such persons if their guilt had no other aggravation, than theirs who actually 'with wicked hands slew him, and hanged him on a tree.' But rising up unto a contempt of all the means of conviction and evidences of truth that God will grant us in this world, they cast themselves without that line of divine mercy and pardon, which some of the others were encompassed withal. So is it with many at this day in the world; who with wicked hearts and blinded minds in the pursuit of carnal lusts, voluntarily and obstinately embrace Mahometanism, with an open renunciation of Christ and the gospel. Unto such persons there is nothing left but 'a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation that shall consume the adversaries.' Not that I would cast all persons who may be actually hurried into this abomination under the same dreadful doom, seeing the case in general will admit of many circumstantial differences, if not altering the nature of the crime, yet disposing of things unto various events. Not only surprisals by mighty temptations with dread and terror, so shaking the powers of nature as to intercept the influence of light and convictions of truth, do claim an exemption from a decretory determination under this sentence; but other cases may also be attended with some such alleviating circumstances, as preserving their minds and souls from wilful malice, leave room for the exercise of sovereign grace. I myself knew one, yea, was conversant with him, and assisting of him in the concerns of his soul, who in the Indies turned Mahometan, was actually initiated

by circumcision into their superstition, and lived in its outward practice a year or two; who yet was sincerely recovered unto repentance, and died in the faith of the Son of God.

Partial apostacy, is every crime against the gospel which partakes of the nature of the other in any measure or degree. And whatever doth so, makes an accession towards the guilt of 'crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him unto open shame.' For it is in his gospel and church alone wherein he can now suffer from the sons of men. When any important principle of evangelical truth is forsaken and renounced, especially when many of them are so; when the rule of obedience which the gospel prescribeth is habitually neglected; when men believe otherwise than it teacheth, and live otherwise than it requireth; there is a partial apostacy from it, whose guilt and danger answers the degrees and measures which in each kind it proceeds unto.

And this is that which we may charge, yea, which the Lord Christ in his word doth charge on every nation under heaven where the gospel is publicly professed. Men are apt to please themselves, to approve of their own state and condition, wherein they have framed unto themselves rest and satisfaction. Churches content themselves with their outward order and administrations, especially where accompanied with secular advantages; and contend fiercely that all is well, and the gospel sufficiently complied withal, whilst their outward constitution is preserved, and their laws of order kept inviolate: about these is the world filled with endless digladiations, wherein the most aim at no more but success in their especial contests. Only a few remain who fruitlessly complain, that under all these conflicts, the glory power, and purity of Christian religion is lost in the world. And it is known that the judgment of Christ concerning churches, as unto their good or bad spiritual estate, is oft-times very distant from their own concerning themselves. It was not only for their sakes, but as a warning unto all others in all ages, that it is entered on an everlasting record, that when the church of Laodicea judged and declared without hesitation, that she was 'rich, increased in goods, and wanted nothing;' the Lord Christ, the Amen, the 'true and faithful witness,' pronounceth her 'poor, and blind, and

wretched, and miserable.' That things at this day are in no better a condition in many, in most churches in the world, is too evident to be denied with any pretence of reverence to the word of God; and it will be afterward made to appear.

Certainly the Lord Christ may say to the churches and nations among whom his name is yet owned in the world, what God said of old concerning that of the Jews, then his only church; 'I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a wild vine unto me?' Jer. ii. 21. Yea, to most of them as in another place; 'How is the faithful city become a harlot? it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water;' Isa. i. 21, 22. The greatness of the evil complained of, the secret mystery of its accomplishment, the unreasonableness, folly, and ingratitude of the fact, the strangeness of the event, makes the complaint to be formed into a scheme of admiration. And indeed, if a man be able to consider the nature of the gospel, with the benefits communicated thereby unto mankind, he cannot but be astonished to find the generality of them to be so soon weary of it, and so ready on all occasions to relinquish it; for as future glory and blessed immortality are attainable only thereby, so all that true freedom, tranquillity, peace, and blessedness whereof our nature in this life is capable, are by no other means communicable unto the souls of men. In brief, whatever is of advantage in any gracious communication from God unto us, without which we are nothing but the very worst and most malignant product of sin and misery, it is all confined unto the gospel and the contents thereof. Wherefore the carelessness of men in neglecting of it, their wickedness in its relinquishment as to its principles and obedience, may well be expressed as God doth in the inferior instance of the apostacy of the Jewish church, Jer. ii. 11, 12. 'Hath a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? But my people hath changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.' Yet thus is it and no otherwise, as we shall afterward manifest, amongst the generality of them that are called Christians in the world.

The church of Rome violently pleads an exemption from this charge, by virtue of special privilege. Not an internal privilege of efficacious grace unto their minds and wills, to preserve it and all that belongs unto it always in saving faith and obedience, wherein alone a compliance with the gospel consists; but an outward privilege of indefectibility, keeping them in the state the gospel requireth, they know not how, but as it were, whether they will or no.

But there is no party or society of men under heaven (considering the notoriety of matter of fact to the contrary) that can with less violence unto common modesty make use of this pretence. So when the Jews of old were charged by the prophets, of apostacy from the law and the obedience which it required, with threats of destruction for their sins, they warded themselves from a conviction of guilt and fear of punishment, by an unreasonable, yea, outrageous confidence in church privileges, then not only appropriated but confined unto them, crying out, 'The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these;' this they thought sufficient to repel the charge of the prophets, to vindicate their innocency, and secure their peace. The reply of the prophet unto them will equally serve in both cases; 'Behold, ye trust in lying words which cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?' Jer. vii. 8—10. A plea of innocency and hope of impunity, under an evident guilt of the highest immoralities, and the vilest of superstitions, do equally participate of folly and impudence.

It is fallen out with this church of Rome somewhat in like manner as it did with him from whom she falsely pretends to derive her wonderful privilege of indefectibility. For when our Lord Christ foretold that all men should forsake him, he alone with the highest confidence, and in a singular manner undertook the contrary for himself. But all the prerogative which he pretended unto issued only in this, that when all the other disciples forsook their Master and fled, according to his prediction, he alone forsook him and denied him. And that impossibility of failing which

this church appropriates unto itself as its singular and incommunicable privilege, hath possibly been a means of, but assuredly is accompanied with, a peculiar apostacy above all other churches in the world. Nothing certainly can be more vain in itself, nor more pernicious unto the souls of them who are under the power of such an apprehension, than this pretence, when all evidences in matter of fact do openly testify to the contrary. The principal nations of its communion are at this day engaged in fierce, bloody, and causeless wars, and these so managed, as to be accompanied with a confluence of all those evils and flagitious wickednesses which have a tendency to make mankind sinful and miserable. Is this that love and peace which, according to the rule of the gospel, ought to be among the disciples of Christ, and without which it is impossible they should have any evidences in themselves, or give any testimony unto the world, that so they are? Doth this answer the promises to be accomplished in the days of the Messiah, Isa. ii. 3, 4. or the innumerable precepts given by Jesus Christ himself as to unity, love, and peace? But wars they say are lawful, and so no argument that those engaged in them are revolters from the rule of the gospel: I say it may be so; but it is far safer to judge all war unlawful, than to justify all the wars that rage in Christendom; or to suppose them consistent with the rule or doctrine of the gospel. The truth is, many things must concur to reconcile any of them unto that obedience which we owe to the Prince of Peace; nor is any of them of that nature or necessity, but that if the gospel had its proper efficacy on the minds of all that are called Christians, and its due authority over their consciences, they would be all prevented. However, in a church pretending to be no way fallen off, or apostatized from the evangelical rule, it is justly expected that another representation be made of the religion taught by Jesus Christ, than that which appears in the desolations that are wrought in the earth, through the lusts and rage of the members of it. The state of things amongst them seems not to constitute that kingdom of righteousness, love, and peace, which Christ came to set up in the world, and which indeed at present, by reason of the general apostacy of the nations, is little elsewhere to be found but in the souls of his sanctified ones. And

those particular churches are blessed in a peculiar manner, who endeavour in their profession and obedience, in any measure to rise up unto an expression thereof.

Besides, the lives of the generality of them who adhere unto the communion of that church, of the most who preside therein, are openly contradictory unto the evangelical rule of obedience. It may for the most part be said concerning them with respect unto the whole, as one of them said of a part of the New Testament; 'Either this is not gospel, or we are not Christians.' In brief, if the kingdom of Christ, which was once a kingdom of light, and truth, and holiness, of separation in principles, affections, and conversation from the world, of communion with God, and loving-kindness among men, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, may become, and is become a kingdom of darkness, pride, ignorance, ambition, persecution, blood, superstition, and idolatry; then and not else doth it visibly remain among them, and they have nothing apostatized from the laws and government of it.

But they can easily discharge themselves of the guilt of this imputation. For notwithstanding that the things mentioned be in part acknowledged to be so, (as to what purpose is it to deny the sun to shine at noonday?) yet the peace, love, and unity, the holiness and righteousness that ought according to the gospel to be and reside in the church, are found amongst them on other accounts. For the whole body of the church and all the members of it, agree and are united in one head, even the pope of Rome, which is the only evangelical unity required of the disciples of Christ; and the holiness of the worship, with that of the saints that have been among them, as also of their present retired devotionists, and the charity of many, testified by magnificent works of piety and bounty, do sufficiently answer that sanctification, holiness, and love, that conformity unto Christ in heavenly-mindedness and obedience, which the gospel requireth. But this is no other but an account of the true nature of that apostacy of the latter times, which is foretold by the apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. 'In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient unto parents, unthankful, unholy, without na-

tural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' Under the power of the most filthy and outrageous lusts, men frame to themselves an outward shape, image, and representation of holiness; they delineate a form of religion, by a substitution of other things in the room of the life and substance of it, which are lost. The power of Christianity is openly denied, in their being acted by the power of all those lusts which are contrary unto it. For the grace of God in the gospel teacheth them by whom it is received, 'to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.' This men cannot more perfectly renounce, than in being 'foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;' such persons being sufficiently remote from being saved 'by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Whilst men live in this state and condition, wherein a complete denial or renunciation of the power of godliness or religion doth consist, if to supply the absence thereof, they draw and take on themselves a scheme, form, and appearance of it, by the application of the names, offices, and properties of gospel effects unto outward lifeless duties, or appearances of them, the apostacy foretold is completely accomplished. This is to let David go, and to foist an image covered with goats' hair in his stead; or at best like Rehoboam, to make brazen shields in the room of those of gold taken away by Shishak. No otherwise doth the church of Rome deal in this matter. The power of faith, love, peace, holiness, conformity unto Christ, self-denial, and all the principles of a heavenly conversation being lost and denied among the generality of its members, and all the real glory of Christianity thereby forfeited and despised; they have set up a form or image of it, wherewith they content themselves, and attempt to deceive others. Instead of that mystical spiritual union with himself and among themselves which Christ prayed for, and purchased for his disciples, they have substituted the 'morphosis' or 'mormo' of an agreement in professing subjection to the

pope of Rome: for that heavenly love of one another in him, and for his sake, which he renews the souls of believers unto by his grace, we are presented in their profession with outward works of charity and bounty, measured and valued by the advantage which redounds unto the principal actors in this show. Peace, the great legacy of Christ unto his followers, with God in their own minds, with the whole creation not shut up under the curse, that comprehensive grace and mercy wherein is comprised all the blessedness which in this world we can be made partakers of, is preserved in the flourishing prosperity and temporal successes of the court of Rome: the internal effectual operations of the Spirit of grace, have the outward dispensations of ordinances shuffled in their place and stead. Regeneration is baptism; growth in grace is episcopal confirmation; the application by faith of the blood of Christ once offered in a holy sacrifice for us, must give way unto the daily sacrifice of the mass offered for the sins of the quick and the dead; disciplines and some outward bodily severities must supply the place of the mortification of sin; the power whereof is never more lost and denied than it is under the highest external pretences of it. So the whole work of the Spirit, as a spirit of grace and supplication in the church, must be, and is unto themselves satisfactorily represented, by reading, saying, chanting with voices and musical instruments, prayers and praises invented and composed by they know not whom, and in a language which the most of those who are obliged to comply with them, understand not at all.

And even the worst part of their image is in what they have fixed on as the delineation and representation of the rule and discipline of Christ in the gospel. For rejecting that humble, holy, meek, diligent endeavour to preserve all the faithful in obedience, love, unity, and fruitful walking, by the application of the commands of Christ unto their souls and consciences through his Spirit, and with his authority; they have erected a worldly domination over God's heritage, in whose exercise more force, fraud, extortion, oppression, violence, and bloodshed, have been acted and perpetrated, than it may be in the secular government of any tyrannical state in the world.

Other instances of the like nature might be given. This is that μόρφωσις τῆς εὐσεβείας, or ἀληθείας τῆς κατ' εὐσέβειαν, that figure and representation of evangelical truth and holiness, wherewith these men would countenance themselves in, and cover from others, that apostacy from the gospel which predominant lusts have cast them into, and keep them under the power of, according as it was foretold it should come to pass in the latter days.

It is yet replied, That whatever apprehensions others may have, or whatever judgment shall be made of the predominant evils reigning among the generality of them, and their seeming inconsistency with the doctrine of the gospel, yet the promise of the Spirit to lead into all truth, is not only granted but confined unto them; so as that they are eternally secured as to faith and belief, whatever other miscarriages they may fall into. And the nature of this plea is so effectual, that if it could be made good and confirmed on their behalf, notwithstanding I see not as yet how it is possible to solve other difficulties that occur in this case, yet would it with me determine all things in controversy between them and us. Let them but evince that they alone do inherit the promised Spirit of Christ, exclusively unto all others, that he dwells, resides, works, guides in and among them alone; and in other things we will spare them the trouble of farther pleading their cause. But their pretence hereunto is impotent and contemptible; for what they insist upon amounts to no more but this, That they being the church, the promise of giving the Spirit is made and fulfilled unto them alone, which only begs the matter that is in principal difference between us; and the disputes about it are endless. If indeed they argued on the other hand, that they are the only church of Christ, because they alone enjoy the promise of the Spirit, as the inference were undoubtedly certain (for it is the presence of Christ by his Spirit that gives being or existence unto the church), so the truth of the assertion were capable of an easy trial and a satisfactory determination. For where the Spirit doth so reside, according to the promise of Christ, and abide with any, as he doth with no other in the same kind, he will infallibly manifest his presence by his operations, and sufficiently evidence them with whom he is, to be the church of

Christ, seeing as he is the promised Spirit of truth the world cannot receive him. His operations are all of them either in a way of grace or gifts; and his gifts are either extraordinary or ordinary. When therefore those of the church of Rome can manifest that they enjoy such gracious operations of the Spirit, as others enjoy nothing of the same kind, or that they are furnished and supplied with such spiritual gifts either ordinary or extraordinary, as no other do participate of with them or besides them; not proving it by saying they alone are the church and therefore it must be so, but by the evidence of the things themselves as it was in the primitive times, they shall not only free themselves from the charge of any dangerous apostacy from the gospel, but enjoy moreover all that their hearts can wish.

But this pretence hath been so often and so fully evinced of falsehood, and that by all means of conviction in the examination of causes and effects (it being undeniably demonstrated, that as no such promise was ever peculiarly made unto them, much less, on such terms of security as they imagine, and that in the issue as unto matter of fact instead of being 'led into all truth,' they have departed almost from all), that it needs not again to be insisted on. And indeed such a promise as is pretended, is altogether inconsistent with the glory and honour of the gospel of God. The word of the gospel, that is, the truth contained therein, is the sole external instrument of the reconciliation of sinners unto God, and of their walking before him in obedience unto his glory; other end and use it hath none. To give by irrevocable grant the possession of this truth, and not in order unto that end, and so to continue it whether ever that effect be produced or no, yea, where it is not, corresponds not with other fruits of the wisdom of God in the dispensation of his grace. And whereas the gospel, as to the nature of its doctrine, will and may be interpreted by its fruits and effects in the lives of men; to allow them the security of its truth on a supposition of a course of sin, and a continuance in a state of irreconciliation or enmity against God, is to expose the doctrine of it, and the law of obedience contained in it, to just censure and reproach.

Wherefore notwithstanding these, or any other pretences

of an alike nature, we may safely proceed to shew, How the generality of Christians have partially apostatized from the gospel, and to inquire into the ways, means, causes, and reasons thereof.

CHAP. III.

Apostacy from the mystery, truth, or doctrine of the gospel. Proneness of persons and churches thereunto; proved by all sorts of instances.

THERE are three things in the gospel which are as the essentially constitutive parts of it: 1. The mystery of its doctrine, which is the object of faith; 2. The holiness of its precepts, which is the matter of our obedience; and, 3. The purity of its institutions of worship, which is the trial of our faith and obedience, as to their profession. With respect unto these we are to make our inquiry, both as unto matter of fact, and as unto the reasons, causes, and occasions of it, in the apostacy from them that is in the world. Instances hereof in every one of the particulars mentioned we shall find in our own days, and those both deplorable and of ill abode. But I shall not confine myself unto the present age, nor unto what is done or come to pass among ourselves; but consider things with respect unto the whole course and progress of religion, since the first preaching and declaration of the gospel.

1. The mystery of the truth or doctrine of the gospel which is the object of our faith, is the foundation of its precepts and institutions, of the holiness it requireth, and of the worship that it appointeth. Where this is forsaken, the others cannot be retained. Men may profess the truth, and yet not yield obedience unto it; Tit. i. 16. 2 Tim. iii. 5. But without the real belief of it, no man can be obedient as he ought. The obedience which the gospel requireth, is the 'obedience of faith,' Rom. i. 5. or being 'obedient unto the faith;' Acts vi. 7. It is this grace of God alone which 'teacheth men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world,' so as to find acceptance with God therein; Tit. ii. 11, 12. Wherever

therefore this is rejected, renounced, forsaken, declined from by any, so far as it is so, so far there is and will be an apostacy from all other concernments of the gospel. This therefore we are to inquire into. And we shall find in our inquiry that all sorts of persons, all churches, are and always have been exceedingly prone to turn aside from the mystery and truth of the doctrine of the gospel; that they have done so accordingly, and that those which are now in the world continue to be of the same temper and inclination. And as it will appear that no evil practices are indulged unto on this supposition; so it is desirable that those who are secure in this matter on such principles as wherewith they are satisfied, would not with too much severity reflect on them who cannot but be jealous over themselves and others. The great apostle himself makes this the principal ornament in the preparation of his triumph upon the success of his ministry, that he 'had kept the faith,' 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. 'I am,' saith he, 'ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' Of all that made way for that triumphant glory which he now had a prospect of, he insists on this only in particular, that he had 'kept the faith,' which he did not do without a severe warfare and conflict. So great a matter was that in his esteem, which most suppose so common, so easy, that little diligence or watchfulness is required thereunto. And the frequent solemn charges, with pathetical exhortations, which he gives unto his son Timothy to be careful herein, manifest both the weight he laid upon it, the difficulty that was in it, and the danger of miscarriage wherewith it was attended: 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.' 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. 'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' And the same apostle expressly mentions the proneness of some

to relinquish the truth of the gospel; whom therefore he would have rebuked sharply, that 'they might be sound in the faith, not giving heed to fables and commandments of men turning away from the truth;' Tit. i. 13, 14. Neither would there be any need that some should 'earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints,' Jude 3. but that others are very ready to corrupt it, and turn away from it.

Examples of this state and event of things among all the churches in the world, since the first planting of them in and by the doctrine of the gospel, will give more evidence unto the truth of our assertion, and a clear account of that matter of fact, whose reasons and causes we are to inquire into. And because I would confine myself unto the full declaration of the mystery of Christ, I shall not insist on the church of the Jews under the Old Testament. But it is known unto all, how from their first transgression in making the golden calf, whereon, as God complains, they quickly, in a few days, turned out of the way, they were continually prone unto all sorts of apostacy; and in the issue, the generality of them fell off from the promise and covenant of Abraham by their unbelief, as the apostle declares, Rom. xi. And it is to be feared, that the appearance and pretence of some Christian churches unto better success, have this only advantage, that their ways and practices are not recorded by the Spirit of God as theirs were. But I shall not insist on that instance.

Of all the churches that are or ever were in the world, those gathered and planted by the apostles themselves, had the greatest advantage to know the mystery and truth of the gospel, and the most forcible reasons unto constancy and perseverance therein. Considering the ability of their teachers to reveal unto them the whole counsel of God, with their 'faithfulness in withholding nothing that was profitable unto them,' Acts xx. their authority, as being sent immediately by Jesus Christ, and their absolute infallibility in all that they delivered; a man would rationally think that there were no room, no pretence left for any to decline in the least from the doctrine wherein they were instructed by them; nor any advantage for Satan or seducers to practise upon them. There is no doubt but most of us suppose, that

had we been so taught by the apostles themselves, nothing could ever tempt us to doubt or waver; much less to relinquish any truth wherein we were so instructed. But alas! this thought is not unlike the apprehension of the rich man in hell, who judged that if one rose from the dead to warn his brethren, they would repent and be converted unto God. But, as Abraham told him, 'if they would not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe should one rise from the dead;' no more would we, if we be not constant and steadfast in the doctrine of the gospel as revealed in the Scripture, be so if we had been taught it by all the apostles together. An example of this proneness to relinquish evangelical principles we have in most of the churches called and gathered by them, whose faith and practice is recorded in their writings.

The church of Corinth was planted by the apostle Paul, and watered by Apollos, that great evangelist; and none can question but that they were fully instructed by them in all the principles of the gospel; which is evident also from that abundance of spiritual gifts which above any other church they had received. But yet, within a few years, before the writing of his first epistle unto them, which was not above five or six years at the most, many of them fell into that fundamental error of denying the resurrection of the dead, whereby they wholly annihilated (as the apostle declares) the whole death and resurrection of Christ; rendering what seemed to remain of their faith altogether vain; 1 Cor. xv. 13—15.

The churches of the Galatians are yet a more pregnant instance. Converted they were unto the faith of Christ, and planted in their church state by the ministry of the same apostle. And although he instructed them in the whole counsel of God, yet it may be justly supposed that he laboured in nothing more than to establish them in the knowledge and faith of the grace of God in Christ, and the free justification of believers by faith in him or his blood alone. For this he everywhere declareth to have been his principal aim and design in the whole course of his ministry. The doctrine hereof they received with so much joy and satisfaction, that they valued the apostle as an angel of God, received him as Jesus Christ, and esteemed him above the

sight of their own eyes; chap. iv. 14, 15. But yet after all this, upon a sudden, so as that he was surprised with it and amazed at it, they fell from the doctrine of grace and justification by faith alone, to seek after righteousness as it were by the works of the law; chap. iii. 1. 'O foolish Galatians,' saith he, 'who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?' Notwithstanding the evident demonstrations of the truth which they had received, and experience of the power of the word, which he mentions, ver. 2. yet all on a sudden they apostatized from it. And as the foundation hereof lay in the uncured folly and vanity of their minds (as we shall see afterward that it doth in all alike cases), yet the strangeness of the manner of it, that it should be so sudden, and it may be universal, makes him ask if there were not some strange fascination or spiritual witchcraft in it. So have we seen persons among ourselves, who in a day or two have renounced all those principles of truth wherein they have been instructed, and embraced a system of notions diametrically opposite unto them; insomuch as some have supposed that there hath been a real diabolical fascination in the matter. Now this apostacy of the Galatians was such, as the apostle peremptorily declares that Christ and all the benefits of his death were renounced therein.

Wherefore, although we may be troubled at it and bewail it, that sundry persons are so ready to fall off from the same truth in the same manner, yet ought we not to think strange of it, or be moved by it; seeing that whole churches called and instructed therein, and that particularly by the apostle himself, did so fall in a short time after their first plantation.

It is more than probable, that those who endeavoured to make a spoil of the Colossians 'by philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men,' chap. ii. 8. had no small success among them. And such things they were, wherewith they were attempted and beguiled, as took them off from holding the head, turning them aside unto the curious speculations of men 'vainly puffed up in their own fleshly minds;' ver. 18, 19. Things of the like nature may be ob-

served in most of the other churches unto whom the epistles are directed.

And in those unto particular persons, as unto Timothy and Titus, he warns them of this readiness of all sorts of persons to apostatize from the truth, giving express instances in some by name who had done so themselves, and sedulously endeavoured the overthrow of the faith of others. The holy apostle John lived to see more of these woful turnings aside from the truth, and relinquishments of evangelical mysteries. Hence in his epistle he gives an account expressly of the apostacies that were among professors of the gospel, of the seducers, and their pretences whereby it was promoted; warning believers of the danger thereof, and of sundry duties incumbent on them necessary to their preservation: and the Epistle of Jude is written to the same purpose. It is known also how most of the churches unto whom the Lord Jesus Christ granted the favour of his visitation, wherein he tried and judged their state and condition, their stability in, and declensions from the truth, were found guilty by him as to some degrees of backsliding and apostacy, for which they were severely reproved.

Certainly we can never enough admire the profound negligence and security of most churches and professors in the world, with respect unto a due adherence unto the mysteries and truths of the gospel. Some think that they have such a privilege, as that they can never decline from them, or mistake about them, nor have done so in the long tract of sixteen hundred years, although they have been plunged into all manner of wickedness and carnal security. Others are wanton and careless under their profession, making little difference between truth and error, or however suppose that it is no great achievement to abide in the truth wherein they have been instructed. And these things have brought most churches and places under the power of that apostacy which shall afterward be discovered. But if the churches thus planted by the apostles themselves were liable unto such defections, and many of them did actually, at least for a season, fall away from most important doctrines of the gospel (from whence it may be they had never been recovered, if healing had not been timely applied by aposto-

lical authority and wisdom), can we, who have not their advantages, nor some of the evidences of the truth which they enjoyed, having all the same causes of apostacy inward and outward which they had to be tried withal, expect that we shall be preserved, unless we watchfully and carefully attend unto all the ways and means whereby we may so be. But these things will be spoken unto afterward.

We may in the next place inquire, What was the state of the churches after the ending and finishing of the sacred records, and the death of the apostles, with all other persons divinely inspired? Here some would have us believe that all things were well, at least for a long season, and some that they are so to this very day. All that was believed and practised among them, must be esteemed almost as sacred as the gospel itself, and be made a part of the rule of our faith and worship. It seems those very churches, which during the days of the apostles and whilst they were under their inspection, were so prone to mistakes, to follow their own imaginations, or comply with the inventions of others, yea, in sundry instances so as to apostatize from the most important doctrines of the gospel, were all on a sudden, on no other advantage but being delivered from apostolical care and oversight, so changed, established, and confirmed, that they declined not in any thing from the truth and rule of the gospel. For my part I pay as great a respect and reverence unto the primitive churches of the first, second, and third centuries, as I think any man living can justly do; but that they did in nothing decline from the grace, mystery, truth, or rule of the gospel, that they gave no admittance unto vain deceits after the tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world, there are such evidences unto the contrary, as none can believe it, but those who have a great mind it should be so, and their credulity at their disposal. I shall therefore briefly inquire what was foretold that would ensue among those churches, and what came to pass accordingly.

The apostle Paul tells the elders of the church of Ephesus, that 'he knew that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock;' Acts xx. 29. Though he compare them to devouring wolves, yet are they not bloody persecutors by external force that he doth intend. For that expression, 'shall enter in among you,'

denotes an admission into the society and converse of the church, under pretence of the same profession of religion. They are therefore heretics and seducers who lay in wait to deceive through various sleights and cunning craftiness, being not (whatever they pretended) really of the church, not of the flock of sheep, no not in profession, but devouring wolves. The same persons are intended, who by Peter are called false teachers, such as should 'privily bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them;' 2 Pet. ii. 1. But the apostle adds moreover in the next place, 'Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them;' ver. 30. I do not think that the apostle in that expression, 'Also of your own selves,' intended precisely any of those who were then personally present with him, or at least it is not necessary that we should so judge; but some that were quickly to succeed in their room and office, are intended. And all the perverse things which they would teach, being contradictory to the doctrine of the gospel, contained some degrees of apostacy in them. That they prevailed in this attempt, that the church was leavened and infected by them, is evident from hence, that not long after that church is charged by our Saviour to be fallen in sundry things from its first purity; Rev. ii. 4, 5. So he assures Timothy, that the time would come (and that speedily, as appears by the prescription he makes for its prevention), 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. 'That men would not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts should heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, whereby they should be turned from the truth, and turned unto fables;' ver. 3, 4. A plain prediction of that defection from evangelical truth and purity which was to befall the churches, and did so. And this, with the danger of it, he doth more vehemently urge, as from a spirit of prophecy, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2. 'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.' By that phrase of speech, 'The Spirit speaketh expressly,' the apostle understands not a plain distinct revelation made thereof unto himself alone, but that the infallible Spirit of God, whereby himself and the rest of the apostles were guided, did every where testify the same. It is an expression not unlike that he

useth, Acts xx. 23. 'The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city;' that is, in all places those who were divinely inspired agreed on the same prediction.

And I judge the apostles did everywhere by joint consent acquaint the churches, that after the gospel had been received and professed for awhile, there would ensue a notable apostacy from the truth and worship of it. So Jude tells them, ver. 17, 18. 'That the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ told them, that in the latter days there should be mockers, who walk after their hearts' lusts.' This all the apostles agreed in the prediction of, and warned all the churches concerning it. St. John expresseth it, 1 Epist. chap. iv. 3. 'This is that spirit of antichrist whereof you have heard that it should come.' He speaks of the coming of antichrist, and therewithal an apostacy from the faith, as that which they had been fully instructed in. And the apostle Paul mentioneth it, as that which not only they were forewarned of, but also acquainted with some particulars concerning it, which it was not, it may be, convenient in those days to mention publicly for fear of offence; 'there must,' saith he, 'be a falling away,' or an apostacy from the faith, under the leading of the man of sin; 'and,' saith he, 'remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? and now ye know what withholdeth;' 2 Thess. ii. 3. 5, 6. He had both told them of the apostacy, and also acquainted them with one particular about it, which he will not now mention. This being the great testimony of the Spirit of God in those days, that the visible church should so fall away from the faith; one of the chief ways whereby Satan brought it to pass was, by the advancing of a contrary revelation and principle, namely, That this or that church, the church of Rome for instance, was infallible and indefectible, and could never fall away from the faith. By this means he obliterated out of the minds of men the former warnings given by the Spirit unto the churches, so rendering them secure, defeating the ends of the prediction: for hereby he not only led men insensibly into the greatest apostacy, but taught them to adhere invincibly unto what they had done, and with the highest confidence to justify themselves therein. But all those and many other warnings did the Holy Ghost give concerning the defection from the

mystery of the gospel, which the churches would in succeeding times fall into; which being neglected by secure professors whilst their faith was weakened and undermined by innumerable artifices, issued in their apostacy. For these things being thus expressly foretold by the Spirit of God himself, we may briefly inquire into the event of the predictions mentioned, and whether indeed they came to pass or no.

An account in general of the state of the church after the days of the apostles we have given us by Hegesippus, who lived in the next age after them, as his words are recorded by Eusebius, lib. 3. cap. 20. Relating the martyrdom of Simon the son of Cleopas, he adds, 'Unto these times the church continued a pure and incorrupted virgin; those who endeavoured to corrupt the rule of saving truth, where any such were, lying hid in obscurity. But after that the holy company of the apostles came to their several ends, and that generation was past who heard the divine wisdom with their own ears, a conspiracy of wicked error by the seductions of those that taught strange doctrines began to take place; and where none of the apostles were remaining, they began to set up their science, falsely so called, with open face, against the preaching of the truth.' We have already seen that there were many declensions in the days of the apostles themselves; but as they were jealous over all the churches with godly jealousy (for having 'espoused them to one husband,' they took care to present them as 'a chaste virgin' unto Christ (the words which Hegesippus alludes unto), and thereon watched against all ways and means whereby as 'the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,' by the teaching of other doctrines than what they had received from them, as Paul speaks, 2 Cor. xi. 2—4.) so by their wisdom, diligence, and watchfulness, they were for the most part soon reduced from their wanderings, and recovered from their mistakes. Hence this holy man pronounceth the church a pure virgin during the days of the apostles and their inspection, at least comparatively as to what ensued thereon. For immediately after, he acknowledgeth that they were much corrupted and defiled, that is, fallen off from 'the simplicity that is in Christ,' in-

tending probably those very things wherein after-ages made them their example. For things quickly came unto that state in the world, and which yet with the most continueth therein, that men desire no greater warranty for their practice in religion, than the shadow or appearance of any thing that was in use or prevailed among those churches, though themselves therein went off evidently from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This account and unquestionable testimony we have in general of the accomplishment of the predictions before mentioned, concerning a declension that was to ensue from the power, purity, and simplicity of the gospel. But whatever is here intended, it must be looked on as the very beginning and entrance of the apostacy that ensued, which can scarce be taken notice of in comparison of that excess which it quickly proceeded unto. In particular, the parts of the sacred predictions mentioned, may be reduced unto four heads. 1. 'Men from among themselves speaking perverse things.' 2. 'Grievous wolves entering in, not sparing the flock.' 3. Weariness, and not 'enduring of sound doctrine,' but turning the mind unto fables, and from the truth. 4. A gradual secret mysterious work of a general apostacy in the whole visible church. And it might be easily demonstrated by instances, how all these had their particular accomplishment, until the whole apostacy foretold was formed and completed. We may give some short remarks upon them all.

1. It cannot be denied, but that many of the principal teachers in the first ages of the church after the apostles, especially among those whose writings remain unto posterity, did, in a neglect of the gospel and its simplicity, embrace and teach sundry things, perverse, curious, and contrary to the form of wholesome words committed unto them; whilst for any thing that appears, they were not so duly conversant in evangelical mysteries with reverence and godly fear, as it was their duty to have been. It is known how instances hereof might be multiplied out of the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens, Origen, Tatianus, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Lactantius, and others. But I shall not reflect with any severity on their names and memories who continued to adhere unto the fundamental principles of Chris-

tian religion, though, what by curious speculations, what by philosophical prejudices and notions, by wrested allegorical expositions of Scripture, by opinions openly false and contradictory to the word of God, they much corrupted and debased the pure and holy doctrine of Jesus and his apostles.

2. The 'grievous wolves' foretold of, who were to 'spoil the flock,' I look on as heretics in their various kinds. And on this account it would seem to exceed all belief, what multitudes and shoals of all sorts of persons fell off from the mystery and truth of the gospel, after they had been declared unto them and professed by them; which is a full confirmation of the assertion before laid down. But they may in general be reduced unto two heads:

(1.) Of those who in a regardlessness and contempt of the gospel which they had received and professed, fell away into foolish extravagant heathenish imaginations, unintelligible endless fancies, for the most part (as is supposed) accompanied with wicked practices, whereby although they would retain the name of Christians, they completely and absolutely fell off from Christ and his gospel. Such were the Gnostics in all their branches, and under their several appellations, Marcionites, Manichees, and others almost innumerable, with whose names, rise, opinions, and course of lives, Epiphanius, Austin, and Philastrius have filled up their catalogues. It may be said, they were all of them persons of so great abominations that they deserve no consideration among such as own Christian religion. But the greater the abominations were which they fell into, the more wild, senseless, and wicked were their imaginations, considering the multitudes of professed Christians which fell into them, the more effectual is the testimony they give unto the truth of our assertion. For were there not an inexpressible proneness in the minds of men to relinquish the mystery of the gospel, was it not promoted by unutterable folly and secret enmity against the truth, would it have been possible that so early in the church, taking date immediately from the decease of the apostles, such multitudes of professed Christians should openly renounce those sacred truths, for such noxious foolish imaginations? These are they who are expressly prophesied of, that they should 'bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, bringing on themselves

swift destruction; many following their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth was evil spoken of;' 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. For all their impious opinions and practices were by the heathen objected unto, and charged on Christian religion, as is evident in Origen's reply to Celsus, among others; and so by reason of them 'the way of truth was evil spoken of.'

(2.) There was another sort of heresies, and so of real apostacy from the mystery of the gospel, whose authors and followers yet pretended an adherence unto and profession thereof. And these may be reduced to two heads: [1.] Concerning the person; and, [2.] concerning the grace of Christ. Of the first sort, the principal and most prevalent was that of the Arians, in denying his Deity; the latter, that of the Pelagians, in opposing his satisfaction, merit, and grace. The first of these was poured out as a flood from the mouth of the old serpent, and bare all before it like a torrent; the latter insinuated itself as poison into the very vitals of the church. The first, as a burning fever, carried present death with it and before it; the latter, as a gangrene or hectical distemper, insensibly consumed the vital spirits of religion. In the first, we have a most woful evidence of the instability of professors, and their readiness to forego the saving mysteries of the gospel. For in little more than half an age after its first rise, the generality of Christians in the world, bishops, priests, and people, fell under the power of it, and in their public confessions renounced and denied the true eternal Deity of the Son of God. For having obtained the patronage of some emperors, as Constantius and Valens, and the suffrage of innumerable prelates, who jointly promoted this heresy by force and fraud; almost the whole world, as to outward profession, was for a season led into this apostacy, wherein some whole nations (as the Goths and Vandals) continued for sundry ages afterward. And for the latter, or Pelagianism, it secretly, subtly, and gradually so insinuated itself into the minds of men, that for the substance of it, it continues to be no small part of that religion which the generality of Christians do at this day profess, and is yet upon a prevalent progress in the world. This is the second way of the apostacy of professors, which was foretold by the Holy Ghost, which so came to pass as that the

wounds which Christianity received thereby are not healed unto this day.

3. Another way was, that men should grow 'weary of sound doctrine,' and not being able, for the reasons afterward to be insisted on, to endure it any longer, should hearken after fables, and be turned away from the truth. And this no less eminently came to pass than any of the former. About the third century it was that monkish fables began to be broached in the world. And this sort of men, instead of the doctrines of the grace of God, of justification by the blood of Christ, of faith and repentance, of new obedience and walking before God according to the commands of Christ and rule of the gospel, which men grew weary of and could not well longer endure, filled their minds, and satisfied their itching ears, with stories of dreams and visions, of angelical persons in themselves, of self-invented devotions, of uncommanded mortifications, and a thousand other foolish superstitions. By such fables were innumerable souls turned from the truth and simplicity of the gospel, thinking that in these things alone religion consisted, despising the whole doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles in comparison of them. These are particularly prophesied of and declared, 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. By the hypocrisy and lies, fabulous stories, and doctrines of devils of this sort of men, the body of the Christian people was so leavened and infected with the belief of vain delusions, and the practice of foolish superstitions, that little or nothing was left sound or wholesome among them.

4. Lastly, the secret working of the 'mystery of iniquity,' in, under, and by all these ways and other artifices innumerable, which the subtlety of Satan, with the vanity of the minds and lusts of the hearts of men made use of, wrought out that fatal apostacy which the world groaned under and was ruined by, when it came unto its height in the papacy. The rise and progress of this catholic defection, the ways, means, and degrees of its procedure, its successful advance in several ages, have been so discovered and laid open by many, so far as the nature of so mysterious a work is capable of a discovery in this world, that I shall not need to repeat here any instance of it. In brief, the doctrine of the gospel was so depraved, and the worship of it so far

corrupted, that the waters of the sanctuary seemed like the river Jordan, to run and issue in a dead sea, or like those of Egypt, to be turned into blood, that would yield no refreshment unto the souls of men. So was that prophetical parable of our Saviour fulfilled, Luke xix. 12—15, &c.

Before I proceed to particulars among ourselves in this kind, I shall yet farther confirm our assertion in general, by the consideration of the second venture (if I may so say), that God gave the gospel in the world, the second trial which he hath made of many churches and nations, and what hath been the event and success thereof.

During the season spoken of, the church was driven into the wilderness, as to its visible profession, where it was secretly nourished by the Spirit and word of God, and the few witnesses unto the truth which yet remained prophesied in sackcloth, ofttimes sealing their testimony (whereby the world was disquieted and tormented) with their blood. But when the time came that God would again graciously visit the remnant of his inheritance, he stirred up, gifted, and enabled many faithful servants of Christ, by whom the work of reformation was successfully begun and carried on in many nations and churches. It is true, they arrived not therein at the purity and peace of the apostolical churches, nor was it by some of them absolutely aimed at. And this quickly manifested itself by the great differences that were among them both in doctrine and worship, whereon those mutual contests and divisions ensued, which proved the principal means of obstructing the progress of their whole work, and continueth to do so to this very day. But a state of a blessed and useful recovery it was from that apostacy into errors, heresies, superstitions, and idolatries, which the whole professing church of these parts of the world was fallen into. And many ways did it manifest itself so to be.

For, 1. The doctrine taught by them generally, was agreeable to the Scripture, which they strenuously vindicated from the corruptions of the foregoing apostacy, and the worship of the churches was freed from open idolatry.

2. The consciences of men, pressed, harassed, and distorted with innumerable vain affrightments, superstitions, foolish imaginations, and false opinions, whereby they were

brought into bondage to their pretended guides of all sorts, and forced unto services under the name of religious duties, merely subservient unto their carnal interests, were set at liberty by the truth, and directed into the ways of gospel obedience.

3. Multitudes had it given unto them on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him, so that no less numbers sealed their testimony with their blood, under the power of those who undertook the patronage of the present apostacy, than did under the rage of the heathens at the first introduction of Christian religion into the world.

4. The fruit which it hath brought forth in many nations by the real conversion of multitudes to God, their edification and holy obedience, their solid spiritual consolation in life and death, with many other things, do give testimony unto this work that it was of God.

It cannot therefore be denied, but that many churches were by the reformation brought into a state of revalescency or recovery from that mortal disease they had been under the power of. But all men know what care and diligence is required to attain perfect health and soundness in such a condition, and to prevent a relapse, which if it should fall out, the last error would be worse than the first. It might therefore have been justly expected from them, and it was their duty to have gone on in the work of reformation until they had come to a perfect recovery of spiritual health. But instead thereof things are so fallen out, by whose default God knows, that not only the work hath received little or no improvement among themselves in the increase of light, truth, and holiness, nor been progressive or successful in the world towards others, but also hath visibly and apparently lost its force, and gone backwards on all accounts. Wherefore we have here also another sad evidence of the proneness of men to forego the truths of the gospel, after they have been instructed in them. I shall instance only in the known doctrines of the reformed churches, aiming especially at what is of late years fallen out among ourselves, in a sort of men whom the preceding generations were unacquainted withal, which I shall therefore insist on apart and by itself afterward.

It is not unknown how ready many, yea, multitudes are in all places to desert the whole Protestant faith and religion, casting themselves into the baffled prostituted remainders of the old apostacy. Every slight occasion, every temptation of pleasure, profit, favour, preferment, turns men unto the papacy; and some run the same course merely to comply with the vanity of their minds in curiosity, novelty, and conformity unto what is in fashion among men. Some fly unto it as a sanctuary from guilt, as that which tendereth more ready ways for the pacification of conscience than that faith and repentance which the gospel doth require. Some having lost the sense of all religion in the pursuit of their lusts, finding themselves uneasy in their atheism, or disadvantaged by the reputation of it, take shelter in the Roman dress. Some are really entangled and overcome by the power and subtlety of numerous seducers, who lie in wait to deceive. By one way and means or another, on motives known to themselves and him who useth them as his engines to subvert the faith, many in all places fall off daily to the papacy, and the old superstition seems to be upon a new advance, ready to receive another edition in the world. Yea, it is to be feared, that there is in many places such a general inclination unto a defection, or such an indifferency to all religion, that multitudes want nothing but a captain to conduct them back into Egypt. For whereas they have lost all sense of the power, use, and excellency of that religion, or profession of truth wherein they have been educated and instructed, and that by giving up themselves unto their lusts and pleasures, which will not fail to produce that cursed effect, they either embrace the Roman religion, to supply the place of that no religion which they had left unto themselves; or if they pretend to soar to such a pitch of reason as to disown the vanity and folly of that profession, and its inconsistency with all the principles of free, generous, and rational minds, they betake themselves for awhile unto a kind of sceptical atheism, which having given them a sorry talkative entertainment for a little space, by debasing and corrupting their minds, gives them up again unto what they did before despise. By such means are the numbers of apostates multiplied amongst us every day.

But there are yet other instances of the proneness of men in foregoing the faith that the church was retrieved unto at the first reformation. How great an inroad hath been made on our first profession, at least an alteration made therein (whether for better or for worse the great day will discover), by that system of doctrines which from its author, and for distinction's sake is called Arminianism! I am not bound to believe what Polinburgh affirms in his preface to the second part of Episcopius's works; namely, 'That the most of the prelates and learned men in England are of their way and judgment,' which as stated by Episcopius hath many Racovian additions made unto what it was at first. Nay, I do believe that what he asserts is false and calumnious unto the persons he intends. But yet I wish withal that too much countenance were not given by many unto his insinuation.

A late writer, in a treatise which he calls A sober and compassionate Inquiry, &c. among other things of the like nature, fancieth that some dislike the church of England on the account of its doctrine. And this they do, as he farther supposeth, because it doth 'not so punctually agree with the synod of Dort as they could wish.' To evidence the unreasonableness hereof, he informs us, 'That no one father or writer of the church, whether Greek or Latin, before St. Austin's time, agreed in doctrine with the determinations of that synod. And as for St. Austin, he was a devout good man, but whose piety was far more commendable than his reason. And therefore rejects it with indignation (as he well may) that a novel Dutch synod should prescribe doctrine to the church of England, and outweigh all antiquity;' and so closeth his discourse with some unworthy calumnies cast on the divines of that assembly, which were esteemed of the best that all the reformed churches of Europe (that of France alone excepted) could afford at that time.

But the interest of the present design which he had in hand, was more regarded in these assertions than that of the truth. It is but a pretence, that those whom he reflects upon do dislike the doctrine of the church of England. For look upon it as it is contained in the Articles of Religion, in the Books of Homilies, and declared in the authenticated writings of all the learned prelates and others for sixty years

after the reformation, wherein the doctrine taught, approved, and confirmed in this church, was testified unto all the world; and the generality of those reflected on by him do sacredly adhere unto it. It is a defection from this doctrine that is by some complained of, and not the doctrine itself. And how the doctrine of the person beforementioned, or of Curcelleus, of whose works Limburgh, in his preface unto them, boasts, that they were so earnestly desired in England, can be brought into a consistency with that of this church so confirmed and declared, will require a singular faculty in the reconciliation of open multiplied contradictions, and those in the most weighty points of religion, to declare. Let but the doctrine, established at the first reformation, as explained and declared in the writings of the principal persons who presided, lived, and died in the communion of this church, which are the measure of it in the judgment of all other churches in the world, be continued and adhered unto, and there will be neither difference nor complaint in this matter. For the disputes which have been, and which it may be always will be among learned men, concerning some abstruse and philosophical notions about the order of the divine decrees, predetermination, the nature of human liberty, and the like innumerable, neither ever did or ever will much disturb the peace of the church. For as they are understood by very few, if by any at all, so the community of Christians are altogether unconcerned with them, either as to their faith or obedience. Differences about them will be ended at the last day, and it may be, as to the great end of the gospel, that is time enough.

But the pretence of this author, that 'no one father or writer of the church, Greek or Latin, before St. Austin's time, agreed with the determination of the synod of Dort,' is of little importance in this cause. For, as I suppose, he may not speak this absolutely on his own trial and experience, but rather on the suggestions of others, so it is no more than what is strongly pretended concerning the doctrine of the holy Trinity itself with respect unto the determination and declaration made of it at the council of Nice. And it were to be wished that too much countenance had not been given unto this imagination by Petavius and some others, whose collections of ambiguous expressions out of the ancient wri-

ters of the church, and observations upon them, are highly boasted in by our present Photinians. And, as it may be, it will not be easy for this author positively to declare what was the judgment of any one ancient writer in all points of Christian belief, especially in such as had not received an especial discussion from oppositions made unto them in their own days, or before them; so it is confessed by all, that an allowance is to be given unto general expressions of such writers as seem occasionally to declare their present thoughts in any particular doctrines, about which there had never been any controversy in the church. For the proper signification of words themselves, whereby men express their minds, is never exactly stated, until the things themselves which they would signify have been thoroughly discussed. Hence the same words have had various uses and divers significations in several ages. And by this rule, whatever be supposed that none of the ancients before Austin were of the same mind with those who assembled at Dort, it may with more truth be affirmed, that none of them were otherwise minded but Origen only, and those who were influenced by him, he being by many, on evident grounds, accused to have prepared the way and opened the door both unto Arianism and Pelagianism.

The censure passed on Austin, namely, 'That his piety was far more commendable than his reason,' is at least as novel as the Dutch synod. For it is not the commendation of his piety, but the disparagement of his reason that is intended. And I must take the liberty to say, that either this author hath not been much conversant in the writings of this great and holy person, or he is a very incompetent judge of the rational abilities of them in whose writings he is conversant. This confidence in pronouncing a censure so contrary to the concurrent sense of the generality of learned men of all sorts in the church for twelve hundred years, savours too much of partiality and prejudice. But it is some relief, that the adversaries of the truth with whom he had to do, were never able to discover, nor make advantage of the weakness of his reason. It was sufficient for the work whereunto God designed him, which was not only to check and suppress the many instances wherein sundry crafty persons apostatized from the truths of the gospel, both in his own

days and before; but also to give over the light of truth clearly discovered and strenuously vindicated, unto posterity, for the benefit of the church in all ages. Persons may freely despise the men of their present contests, against whom they have all the advantages which may prompt them thereunto; and they have so much countenance in casting contemptuous reflections on the principal first reformers, as not to think therein they invade the bounds of Christian modesty. But what will be the apology for their confidence in such censures of the rational abilities of Austin, I cannot conjecture, though the reason of it I can easily guess at. However it needeth not be much taken notice of, seeing a censure somewhat more severe hath not long since been passed on St. Paul himself by a writer of the same strain and judgment.

There is little ground of fear, as I suppose, that a novel Dutch synod (as it is called), though consisting of persons delegated from all the principal reformed churches of Europe (that of France only excepted), 'should prescribe doctrines to the church of England;' seeing in that synod the church of England did rather prescribe doctrines to the Dutch, than receive any from them. For the divines, which had the preeminence of suffrage and authority in that assembly, were those of the church of England, sent thither by public authority to testify the doctrine of this church, and to lead the Dutch into the same confession with themselves.

But to return, it is to be feared that lest as Pelagianism, in its first edition, did secretly and gradually insinuate itself into the animal and vital spirits of the body of the church in those days, proving a poison unto it; so that under its new varnish and gilding it will be received, until it diffuse itself into the veins and vitals of the present reformed church-state in the world. This I know, that some pretending a zeal for holiness and reformation of life, do yet with a shameful partiality charge those doctrines as a principal means of the decay of piety, which they cannot but know were generally believed and avowed then when piety most flourished in this nation. But this is part of that entertainment which the church of England meets with at this day from her degenerate offspring. The doctrine of all the ancient bishops must be traduced as the means of the decay of piety. And which increaseth the wonder, it had not this effect till it

began to be publicly deserted and renounced. For whether they are the one the cause of the other or no, yet there is a demonstrative coincidence between the originals of our visible apostacy from piety, and the admission of these novel opinions contrary to the faith of the first reformed churches, and that they both bear the same date among us.

But there is yet a greater abomination effectually taking place among us, to the utter overthrow of the faith of some, and the corrupting of the minds of others from the truth of the gospel. This is the leprosy of Socinianism, which secretly enters into the walls and timber of the house, whence it will not be scraped out. It commenced in the world some time before the other spring of a partial apostacy beforementioned. But for a good space it lay fermenting in some obscure places of Poland and the countries adjacent. When the books and writings of the authors and promoters of the opinions called by that name, came once to be known and read in other places, they were continually all of them abundantly answered and confuted by learned men of all sorts, so as it was justly hoped it would obtain no great success or progress in the world. But,

> Latius excisæ serpit contagio gentis
> Victoresque suos natio victa premit.

The vanity of the minds of men, their weariness of sound doctrine, which they will endure no longer whatever they embrace, have given it admission, either in part or in whole, among multitudes who once professed the faith of the gospel. For whereas the whole system of the opinions of those men is but a collection of such errors as formerly perplexed the church, and overthrew the faith of many, the principal and most material of them may be referred unto two heads: (1.) Photinianism; and, (2.) Pelagianism. Unto the first are referred their denial of the Trinity, and consequently of the divine person and incarnation of the Son of God. Under the latter, their opposition unto the satisfaction of Christ, the true nature of his priesthood and sacrifice, justification by faith in his blood, and the imputation of his righteousness, of the efficacy of his grace, and the corruption of our natures by the fall may be comprised. The denial of the resurrection of the same bodies, the eternity of the punishment of the damned in hell, with other of their imaginations, were also

traduced from some of old. The first part of their heresy as yet takes no great place but only among themselves, the doctrine opposite unto it being secured by law, and the interest of men thereon who have advantage by the public profession. But yet it is to be feared, that the coldness of many in asserting and defending those fundamental doctrines of the gospel which they oppose, yea, their indifferency about them, and the horrid notions, with strange expositions, that some have embraced and do use concerning the person of Christ, do proceed from some secret influence on the minds of men, which the venom of their opinions and sophistical disputes have had upon them. And from a just improvement of their sentiments have proceeded those bold efforts of atheistical imaginations and oppositions unto the Scripture, both the letter and sense of it, which have of late been divulged in public writings, which being brought from the neighbour nation, do find no slack entertainment by many among us.

But as to the latter branch of their profession, or their Pelagianism, it hath diffused itself among multitudes of persons who were sometimes of another persuasion, and have yet engagements on them so to be. All that unreasonable advancement of reason in matters of religion which we have amongst us, the new notions men have of the satisfaction of Christ, pretending to the acknowledgment of it, indeed destructive unto it, the noisome conceptions of the little use of the person of Christ in religion beyond the revelation and confirmation of the gospel; doctrines of the possibility, yea, facility of yielding acceptable obedience unto all evangelical commands without the aids of effectual grace; of the powers and incorruption of our natures; of justification by and upon our own obedience; of the suitableness of all gospel mysteries to unrenewed reason or an unsanctified mind; of regeneration, as consisting only in the reformation of our lives; with a rejection of all internal real efficacy in converting grace, and the substitution of morality in the room of grace; with the denial of any influences of grace from Jesus Christ unto the holiness of truth; and many other opinions wherewith men even pride themselves to the contempt of the doctrine received and established in the reformed churches of old, are borrowed out of the storehouses of their

imaginations, shall I say, or raked out of their dunghill. And whither the infection may diffuse itself, I know not; The resurrection of the same bodies substantially, the subsistence and acting of the soul in its separate state and condition, the eternity of hell torments, the nature of Christ's sacerdotal office as distinguished from his regal, begin to be either questioned or very faintly defended amongst many. And many other noisome opinions there are, about the Scriptures, the nature of God, his attributes and decrees, the two covenants, our union with Christ, the gifts and operations of the Spirit, which some vent as pure mysteries and discoveries of truth, and value themselves for being the authors or maintainers of them, that came all from the same forge, or are emanations from the same corrupt fountain of Socinianism.

We have, as I suppose, sufficiently demonstrated the truth of what we before observed, concerning the proneness and readiness of mankind to relinquish and fall off from the mystery and doctrine of the gospel, after it hath been declared unto them, and received by them. Withal we have stated the matter of fact, namely, That such a defection there hath been, and is in the world at this day; the reasons and causes whereof we are now to inquire into. Only I must premise, that the principal instance designed, and which is among ourselves, I have referred to an especial consideration by itself, wherein we shall inquire into the especial reasons of it, which are superadded unto those more general, which equally respect apostacies of this kind.

CHAP. IV.

The reasons and causes of apostacy from the truth or doctrine of the gospel, and the inclination of all sorts of persons thereunto in all ages, inquired into and declared. Uncured enmity in the minds of many against spiritual things, and the effects of it in a wicked conversation, the first cause of apostacy.

For an entrance into the ensuing discourse, I shall lay down that principle which I presume all men will give their assent unto; namely, That a defection from the truth of the gospel once professed, is a sin of the highest guilt, and that

which will issue in the most pernicious events. God himself did frequently complain by his prophets of old, that his people 'had forsaken him,' and were gone away from him; that is, the doctrine and institutions of his law, the only means of conjunction and communion between him and them. Deut. xxviii. 20. 1 Sam. viii. 8. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 25. Jer. v. 7. 19. xvi. 11. To convince them of their horrible folly and iniquity herein, he demands of them, 'What iniquity they had seen in him, what inequality in his ways, what disappointments they had met withal, that they should grow weary of his laws and worship,' so as to relinquish them for such things and ways as would end in their temporal and eternal ruin; Jer. ii. 5. Ezek. xviii. 25. For if there were nothing in them whereof they had cause to complain; if they were all holy, just, and good; if in the observance of them there was great reward; if by them God did them good and not evil all their days, there was no apology or excuse to be made for their folly and ingratitude. That so it was with them, that their defection from the law and institutions of God, was the highest folly and greatest wickedness imaginable, is by all acknowledged; yea, it will be so by them who at the same time are under a greater guilt of the same kind. For the judgments of men are oft-times so bribed by their present interests, or corrupted by the power of depraved affections, as to justify themselves in worse evils than those which they condemn in others.

But as it was with the people of old, so it is at present with them who decline from the mysteries or renounce the doctrines of the gospel, after they have been received and professed by them, or have done so at any time. Yea, their guilt hath greater aggravations than accompanied the idolatrous revolts of the Jews of old. For the gospel is a clearer revelation of God, and much more glorious than that which was made by the law. There is therefore no reason to be taken from itself, why men should desert it, either in its doctrines and precepts, or the worship which it doth require. Nothing can be charged on the gospel, nothing on any thing contained in it or produced by it, which should countenance any in a defection from them. It is in itself a blessed emanation from the eternal fountain of wisdom and truth; and hath more impressions and characters upon it of divine

excellencies, than the whole creation besides. Neither hath it any proper operations or effects on the souls of men, but what are means and causes of deliverance from their original apostacy from God, with all the evil that ensued thereon, which is all that is evil. For the recovery of lost mankind from a state of darkness, bondage, and misery, into that of liberty, light, and peace, the present favour and future enjoyment of God, with order and mutual usefulness in this world whilst they continue therein, is the great and immediate design of the truths of the gospel. Neither is there any thing that is truly good, holy, just, benign, or useful among men, but what is influenced by them, and derived from them. Some there have been, indeed, perhaps in all ages, who pretending unto the liberty of it, have really been servants of corruption, and have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. And some have charged the principal doctrines of it, as those which give men a discharge from a necessity of holy obedience, and the utmost use of their own endeavours therein. And there are those who being given up to sensuality of life, living under the power of darkness in the pursuit of secular ends, who have no other thoughts of it but what the devils in the possessed man had of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it comes to 'torment them before their time.' And there are not wanting some who fear no evil but from the gospel; who suppose, that the minds of all men would be serene and peaceable, that all things would be quiet, flourishing, and orderly in the world, if the gospel were out of it. For whatever disturbances men make themselves, in envy, wrath, malice, persecution of others, the guilt and blame of them shall be charged on the gospel itself. And it is notoriously known how a false pretence of some grants made in, and appointments settled by, the gospel, hath been made use of, to countenance some sorts of men in the crafty acquisition, and violent possession of worldly power, grandeur, and wealth, venting themselves in ambition, cruelty, luxury, and pride of life. But the iniquity and folly of all these abominations, cursed artifices of the father of lies and fountain of malice, shall be, if God will, elsewhere discovered. At present I shall take it for granted, that in itself it is a glorious representation of divine wisdom, goodness, grace, and love; neither doth it produce

any effects but whereof God is the immediate author, and will be the everlasting rewarder. Wherefore the reasons and causes of apostacy from the part of the gospel under present consideration, that is, the mysteries and truth of its doctrine, must be searched for in the minds of them by whom it is forsaken, with the external furtherances that do accompany them.

It is not unnecessary such an inquiry should be engaged into. For things are in that posture and condition in the Christian world in this present age, that if it should be supposed, that the lives of professed Christians do make a due representation of the gospel, that the generality of men were led and influenced into that course of life and conversation which they openly pursue, by the doctrines and principles of it, it could scarce stand in competition with heathenish philosophy, for usefulness unto the glory of God, and the good or advantage of mankind. It is not therefore the gospel, but it is apostacy from it which hath produced so many deplorable effects in the world, and which by drenching mankind in wickedness make way for their misery and ruin. And this in the vindication of the gospel will be made in some measure to appear, in the discovery of the causes and reasons of this apostacy. For let men pretend what they please, unless they have first forsaken the gospel in their hearts and minds, they would not, they could not, forsake all rules of holiness and morality also in their lives.

Again, the prevalency of this defection is so great, and the neglect of men (either intent on their private occasions, desires, and interests, or captivated under the power of it, unto the approbation of the greatest and most dangerous evils) so visible and shameful, as that every sincere attempt to warn them of their danger, to excite them unto their duty, or direct them in its performance, whereby the progress of this product of the counsels of hell may be obstructed, and themselves defeated, ought to have a candid reception of all those who have a due regard unto the interest of Christ and the gospel in the world, or the everlasting concernments of their own souls.

These are the general ends which are aimed at in the ensuing discourses. And if any one of greater abilities for this work, shall be hereby provoked, or take occasion from

hence to make a more diligent inquiry into the causes and reasons of that defection from the glory and power of Christian religion which prevails in the world, and shall thereon prescribe more suitable and effectual remedies for the healing of this epidemical distemper, I shall rest abundantly satisfied in the success of this attempt and essay. And the reasons which present themselves to my thoughts are these that follow.

That rooted enmity which is in the minds of men by nature unto spiritual things, abiding uncured under the profession of the gospel, is the original and first spring of this apostacy. So the apostle tells us, that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God;' Rom. viii. 7. that is, unto the revelation of the will and mind of God in Christ, with the obedience which he requireth thereunto; for of these things doth he there discourse. The nature of this enmity, and how it operateth on the minds of men, I have elsewhere declared at large, and shall not here again insist upon them. It is sufficient unto our present purpose, that men on various accounts may take upon them the profession of the truths of the gospel, whilst this enmity unto spiritual things abides uncured, yea, predominant in their minds. So was it with them of whom the apostle complains, that under their profession they manifested themselves by their wicked lives, to be 'enemies of the cross of Christ;' Phil. iii. 18. As those also who professing 'that they know God, do yet in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate;' Tit. i. 16.

Thus upon the first preaching of the gospel, many were convinced of its truth, and took upon them its profession, merely on the account of the miracles that were wrought in its confirmation, whose hearts and minds were not in the least reconciled unto the things contained in it. See John ii. 23, 24. Acts viii. 13.

Some are so far prevailed with as to acknowledge its truth, by the efficacy of its dispensation as an ordinance of God for their conviction and instruction, and yet not part with their enmity against it. Thus John was among the Jews as a 'burning and shining light,' and they rejoiced for a season in his ministry, John v. 35. insomuch as the body of the people were initiated into his doctrine by the token

and pledge of it in baptism; Matt. iii. 5, 6. But though all of them confessed their sins according to his direction, very few forsook them according to their duty.

When both these concurred, preaching and miracles in an eminent manner, as when our Saviour preached on his feeding 'five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes,' being prepared in their minds by the miracle they saw, they were so affected with his doctrine about the 'bread of life that came down from heaven,' that they cried out, 'Lord, give us evermore of this bread;' John vi. 34. But their natural enmity unto spiritual things being yet uncured, upon his procedure to instruct them in heavenly mysteries they put in exceptions to his doctrine, ver. 41. 52. 60. and immediately forsook both him and it; ver. 66. And our Saviour assigns the reason of their defection to have been their unbelief, and that it was not given unto them of the Father to come unto him; ver. 64, 65. or the enmity of their carnal minds was yet unremoved. Hence what they esteemed a hard and unintelligible saying, ver. 52. 60. his true disciples understood to be 'the words of eternal life;' ver. 68.

In process of time many are prepossessed with notions of the truth of the gospel in their education, by the outward means of instruction that have been applied unto them. But yet notwithstanding this advantage, they may still abide under the power of this depravation of their minds.

Evangelical truths being by these or the like means entertained in the minds of men, which are also variously affected with them, they will move and act towards their proper end and design. And hereof there are three parts.

1. To take off the soul of man from rest and satisfaction in itself, as unto present peace in the condition wherein it is, and hope of future blessedness by its own endeavours. For neither of these are we capable of in our depraved apostate state. Wherefore the first work of the gospel is to influence, guide, and direct the minds of men to renounce themselves as to these ends, and to seek after righteousness, life, peace, and blessedness, by Jesus Christ.

2. The renovation of our minds, wills, and affections, into the image or likeness of God, is another part of its design. And this it doth by presenting spiritual things unto

us, in that light and evidence, with that power and efficacy, as to transform us into their likeness, or to bring the substantial image of them upon our whole souls; 2 Cor. iii. 18. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.

3. It engageth the whole soul in all its powers and faculties, through the whole course of its activity, or in all it doth, to live unto God in all holy obedience; Rom. xii. 1.

But when this work, or any part of it, is urged on the consciences and practice of men, they like it not in any measure. The uncured enmity whereof we speak, riseth up in opposition unto them all. It begins to suppose that it hath admitted a troublesome inmate, that came in as it were to sojourn, and will now be a judge. Whilst the mind is exercised only about the notions of truth in speculation and reasonings, it is satisfied and pleased with them. Yea, it will come unto a compliance with its guidance in sundry things and duties which it may perform, and yet abide upon its old foundations of self-sufficiency, and satisfaction; Mark vi. 20. But when, in pursuit of the ends before mentioned, the gospel presseth to take men off wholly from their old foundations, and principles of nature, to work them unto a universal change in powers, faculties, operations, and ends, to make them new creatures, it proves irksome unto that enmity which is predominant in them, which therefore stirreth up all the lusts of the mind, and the flesh, all the deceitful policies of the old man and powers of sin, all carnal and unmortified affections in opposition unto it. Hence spiritual truths are first neglected, then despised, and at last on easy terms parted withal.

For men by conviction, and on rational grounds or motives, whether natural or spiritual, may receive that as truth, and give an assent unto it, which when it should be reduced unto practice, the will and affections will not comply withal. So it is said of some, that οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν Θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει· Rom. i. 28. 'It liked them not,' it pleased them not, they approved not of it, 'to hold,' retain, or keep 'God in their knowledge;' or to continue in that acknowledgment of him whereof they were convinced. The inbred notions which they had by the light of nature, with their consideration of the works of creation and providence, gave them conceptions and apprehensions of the being and power of

God; ver. 19, 20. Hereby they are said to 'know God;' as they did with respect to the things mentioned, that is, the essential properties of his nature, 'his eternal power and Godhead;' ver. 21. This knowledge, these notions and conceptions, did immediately direct them 'to glorify him as God' in holy worship and obedience, as it is expressed in the same verse. But this, through the depravation of their minds and affections, they liked not, and therefore would not retain this knowledge of him, but gave themselves up unto all abominable idolatries and brutish lusts, which were inconsistent therewithal, as the apostle at large declares. Wherefore, even as unto divine things that are conveyed unto us by natural light, and such as is unavoidable unto all mankind, the will, the affections, and the practical understanding, are more vitiated and corrupted than are the preceptive and directive powers of the mind. And hence it was that all the world, who had nothing to conduct them but the light of nature, apostatized from its guidance, and lived in contrariety unto it. They were all rebels against that light which they had, and so will all mankind be without the especial grace of God.

It is so also with respect unto truths communicated by supernatural revelation. It is given as the character of those who were to carry on the great apostacy from the mysteries and worship of the gospel, that they 'received not the love of the truth that they might be saved;' 2 Thess. ii. 10. The truth itself, as to the profession of it, they did receive and own for a time. But such an approbation of it, such a love unto it, as should incline them unto obedience, or the improvement of it unto its proper ends, that so they might be saved, they neither had nor endeavoured after. This made them prone on all occasions and temptations to forego and relinquish the profession of it, to change it for the vilest errors and grossest superstitions. For in such a posture of mind, men's corruptions will prevail against their convictions. First they will stifle the truth as to its operations, and then reject it as to its profession. Let other notions be proposed unto them, more suited unto the vanity of their minds or the sensuality of their affections, and they will not fail of a ready entertainment.

There are instances among all sorts of men, how when

they have imbibed persuasions and opinions, even such as are false, vain, and foolish, and have them rivetted in their minds, by powerful interests or inveterate prejudices, neither the evidence of truth, nor the fear of danger, can prevail with them for their renunciation or relinquishment. All false ways in Christianity, and that of Mahometanism, give us examples hereof. But we have two general instances of it, that may well fill the minds of men with astonishment: the first is of the Jews, who for so many successive generations, under all manner of difficulties and calamities, continue obstinate in the most irrational unbelief and apostacy from the faith of Abraham their forefather, and the expectation of all their ancestors, that can enter into the heart of any man to imagine. For many generations, those who from among them have been so convinced of their folly, as really and sincerely to embrace the gospel, do scarce answer one unto a century of years. The other is in the church of Rome. It is known how that communion aboundeth with men otherwise wise and learned, what kings and rulers of the earth do adhere thereunto. And this they continue to do, and will do so, notwithstanding that the errors, impieties, superstitions, and idolatries of that church are so many and so manifest. Other instances there are, sufficiently pregnant to evince, that no opinions in religion can be so foolish or contemptible, but that some will be found pertinaciously to adhere unto them against all endeavours for their relief, either in the way of God by rational and spiritual convictions, or in the way of the world by persecution.

It may be, more may and will be found to be obstinate in error, upon trials with difficulties, dangers, and oppositions, than on the like trials be constant in the profession of the truth; I mean among them who together with its external profession have not received its internal power and efficacy, with the love of it in their hearts. For both sorts receive their notions and apprehensions of things in the same way, and on the same grounds of appearing reasons, though the understanding be imposed on and deceived in the one and not in the other. But error once received under the notion of truth, takes firmer root in the carnal minds of men, than truth doth or can, whilst their minds are so carnal. And the reason of it is, because all error is some way

suited unto the mind as thus depraved, and there is nothing in it that is enmity thereunto. Neither in itself nor any of its effects doth the mind dislike it; for being fallen off from the first truth and goodness, it wanders and delights to wander in crooked or by-paths of its own. For 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions;' Eccles. vii. 29. These it pleaseth itself withal, and is conformed unto. For there is somewhat in every error to recommend itself unto the vanity or curiosity, or pride, or superstition of the carnal mind. But it is otherwise with evangelical truths, which the mind disrelisheth, because of its innate enmity unto the things which they propose and exhibit. Hence it is easier for the most part to draw off a thousand from the profession of it, who have no experience of its power and efficacy in their souls, than to turn one from an erroneous way, especially if he be confirmed in it by interest and prejudice. And so it is at present in the world. Every sort or party of false professors, as Papists and others, do carry off multitudes of common professors from the truth which they had owned, but seldom do we hear of any one recovered from their snares. Nor need any seducers desire a greater advantage, than to have admittance unto their work where persons live in an outward profession of the truth, and inward enmity unto it. They shall be filled with proselytes unto satiety.

This was the fundamental cause of that apostacy from the doctrine and truths of the gospel, which have prevailed in almost the whole visible church. Had the generality of men received the truth in the love thereof, had they not had a secret enmity in their hearts and minds against it, had not things vain, curious, and superstitious, been suited unto the prevailing principles of their minds and affections, they would not, they could not upon any suggestions or temptations, so easily, so universally have forsaken the gospel for the traditions of men, nor gone away from Christ to follow after antichrist, as we know them to have done. But when an external profession of the truth became to be transmitted from one generation to another, the spirit and power of it being wholly neglected, men did but wait for opportunities gradually to part with it, and give it up for any thing else that was suggested unto them; many in the mean time set-

ting their wits on work to find out inventions suited to their lusts and corrupt affections. That it was thus with them who were carried away with the great apostacy, that they did by all outward ways and means in their lives and conversations manifest that so it was with them, shall be afterward declared. And had it not been so with them, the event complained of had not ensued.

And herein lies the present danger of the persons, churches, and nations, which at this day make profession of the gospel. For if a pressing trial, or vigorous temptation, if a coincidence of various ways and means of seduction do befall them who have received the truth, but not in the love and power of it, they will be hardly preserved from a general apostacy. For when any attempts shall be made from without upon them, they have treachery from the deceitfulness of their own hearts at the same time working in them. For their uncured enmity against the truth doth but watch for an opportunity to part with it, and reject it. Any thing that will but free them from the efficacy of those convictions, or power of the traditions under which they are held captive unto the profession of the truth, as it were whether they will or no, shall be cheerfully embraced and complied withal. And the danger hereof doth sufficiently evidence itself in that open dislike of the rule and conduct of the truth, which most men testify in the whole course of their lives.

It is plain, therefore, that unless this enmity be conquered or cast out of the mind, unless the mind be freed from its corrupt agency and effects, unless the truth obtain its real power and efficacy upon the soul, unless it be 'so learned as it is in Jesus,' whereby men 'put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according unto deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of their minds, putting on that new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' unless they love and value it for the effects of spiritual peace, power, and liberty, which it produceth in them, there will be found among them little constancy or perseverance in their profession, when temptations shall concur with opportunities for a revolt. For who can give security that what hath formerly fallen out amongst the generality of mankind, shall not in any place do so again, where the same causes of it do again concur?

Having discovered this first cause of defection from the gospel, we may easily discern what are the only true effectual ways and means of the preservation and continuance of the true religion in any place or among any people where it hath been professed, especially if temptations unto a revolt should abound, and the season be made perilous by advantageous opportunities: love of the truth, and experience of its power in the hearts of men, will produce this effect, and nothing else. All other means, where these have been wanting, have failed in all places in the world, and will do so again when a time of trial shall come. True religion may be established by law, countenanced by authority, have a prescription of a long profession, or be on other accounts so fixed on the minds of men, as that multitudes shall promise the firmest stability in the profession thereof. But there is no security in things of this nature; and we shall quickly see all the hopes that are built upon them vanish into nothing. Convictions or traditions, unto whose power a secret enmity is retained, may make a bluster and noise for a season, but every breath of temptation will carry them away before it. Were it not so with the most of men, had it been possible, that so many nations in less than an age should fall into Arianism, after the truth had been so long known and professed among them; or that the body of this nation after a blessed reformation should again relapse into popery, as in the days of queen Mary, when many who had professed the gospel, cast others into flames who continued so to do.

It is greatly complained of, that popery doth increase in this nation, and some express their fears of its farther prevalency, and that perhaps not without cause. And although there are several other ways whereby men may and do apostatize from the truth, yet all those who take any other measure of things, besides their own secular interests, with the corrupt affections of their minds, in wrath, envy, and revenge, do look on this as far the most dangerous, as that which will be most compliant with the predominant lusts of the present age, and most comprehensive to receive the community of men. Besides, by what it hath done formerly, it sufficiently instructs what it is likely enough to do again. Wherefore very many industriously attempt its prevention, as that which

would prove (if it should prevail) deplorably ruinous unto the nation and their posterity therein. To this end some implore the aid of authority for the enacting of severe laws for the prohibition of it. This, according to the opinion of late ages, some suppose the most effectual means for the preservation of the truth. For if they can but destroy all that are otherwise minded, the rest of mankind will have the face of peace unto them who are advantaged thereby. Some write books in the confutation of the errors of it, and that to very good purpose. But in the mean time (if there be any thing of truth in reports), the work is as effectually progressive as if no opposition had been made unto it. And we may assure ourselves, that these and such like means as these, if they are alone, will never keep popery out of England, if it should ever have an advantage and opportunity for a return, nor prevent the entrance of any other false way in religion.

As for the use and severity of penal laws, I meddle not with it, as that which is to be referred to the wisdom of our governors. But I must needs say, it seems not to be unto the advantage of truth, or at least, not unto the reputation of them by whom it is professed, that they should no otherwise be able to preserve its station amongst men. Neither can it be honourable unto any religion, that where it pretends unto all the advantages and rights of truth, and in the real possession of all outward emoluments and supportments, yet that it cannot secure itself or maintain its profession without outward force and violence, things so remote from the first introduction and planting of truth in the world. But these things are not of our present consideration. For the confutation of the errors, superstitions, and idolatrous practices of the church of Rome in books of controversy, it is no doubt a work good, useful, and necessary in its kind. But when all is done, these things reach but a few, nor will many divert from other occasions to the serious consideration of them. Wherefore some other way must be fixed on and engaged in, to secure the truth and interest of Protestant religion among us. And this is no other but the effectual communication of the knowledge of it unto the minds, and the implantation of the power of it on the hearts of the

people. This is that alone which will root out of them that enmity unto evangelical mysteries and spiritual things, which betrays the souls of men into apostacy.

Unless men know what they are to value religion for, and what benefit they really receive by its profession, it is irrational to expect that they will be constant therein when a trial shall befall them. If once they come to say, 'It is in vain thus to serve God, or what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?' they will easily admit the yoke of any falsehood or superstition, that pretends to gratify them with greater advantages. And at one time or other it will be no otherwise with them, with whom this enmity is predominant.

But on the other side, when God by the gospel shines into the hearts of men, 'to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ;' when they find their consciences set free thereby from the intolerable yokes of superstition and tradition; and that by the word of truth which they do profess, they are begotten anew unto the hope of eternal life, their inward man being renewed, and their lives reformed thereby; that their expectation of a blessed immortality is well founded on it, and safely resolved into it; they will, through the effectual supplies of the Spirit of Christ, abide constant in the profession of it, whatever may befall them.

On these terms, on these experienced evidences of truth and goodness, was the gospel first entertained among men, and the reformation of religion first introduced into this nation. For although sundry other things concurred unto its reception and establishment, yet if the minds of multitudes had not received an experience of its power and efficacy unto the ends mentioned, it would never have been of any permanancy among us. The mere outward form of true religion is not able to contend with that appearance which error and superstition will represent unto the minds of men, as knowing how much they stand in need thereof.

These things I know are by some despised. They suppose they have surer ways, and better expedients for the preservation of the profession of the gospel amongst us, than its own power and efficacy. What those ways are we need not conjecture, seeing themselves declare them continually,

but they shall not be here spoken unto. But it is to be feared that they may be filled with the fruit of their own imaginations when those things shall fail them wherein they have placed their confidence. Wherefore, if there be a neglect about these things in the ministry, and others, whose duty it is to promote them, the issue will be sad, it may be beyond what is feared. For if the body of the people be suffered to live without any evidence of an acquaintance with the power of that truth which they do profess, or any demonstrative fruits of it in a holy conversation, we may cry out, Popery, popery, as long as we please, when temptations, opportunities, and interests do concur, their profession will fall from them as dry leaves from a tree when they are moved with the wind. The apostle tells us, that those 'who went out from them were never of them, for if they had been of them they would have continued with them;' 1 John ii. 19. They were among them by the profession of the truth, or they could not have gone out from them. But they were 'never of them' in the participation of the power of the truth, and 'communion thereby with the Father and the Son;' for if they had, they would have continued with them, that is, steadfast in their profession.

This is that which ought to be fixed on the minds of all persons concerned, of all that are zealous for the truth of the Protestant religion, or are obliged, what lies in them, to provide for its preservation. When things are come unto the appointed season, when they are issuing in that period which they have a natural tendency unto, all other expedients and devices will be of none effect. A diligent communication unto the body of the people through the dispensation of the word, or preaching of it, the power of the truth they profess in all its blessed effects, whereon they will have an experience and witness within themselves, of the reasons why they ought to abide constantly in its profession, will alone secure the continuance of the gospel in succeeding generations. All other means will be ineffectual unto that end; and so far as without this they are or may be effectual, it will be of no advantage unto the souls of men.

That there is a danger at all times of a defection among professed Christians from the truth, hath been before evinced. That this danger at present hath many especial circum-

stances rendering it dangerous in a peculiar manner, is in like manner acknowledged by all such as call these things into serious consideration. And it will not, I presume, be denied, but that every man, according as he is called and warranted by especial duty, is obliged to his utmost endeavours for the prevention of a revolt from the truth. The whole inquiry is, What is the best way, means, or expedient to be plied unto this end. And this, I say, is only by the diligent ministerial dispensation of the word, with such an exemplary zeal and holiness in them by whom it is dispensed, and all other things requisite unto the discharge of that work, as may reconcile the hearts of the people unto evangelical truths, beget in them a delight in obedience, and implant the power of the word in their whole souls. Want hereof was that which lost the gospel in former ages, and will do so wherever it is, in this or those which are to come. And I shall not in my own thoughts blameably digress from my present subject, if I confirm this opinion with some few obvious considerations. For,

1. It is the way, the only way which God hath ordained, and which he blesseth to this end and purpose. None will pretend, as I suppose, that God hath appointed any other way to bring men unto the profession of the truth, but by the preaching and dispensation of the word alone. When they are wrought upon or convinced thereby, so as to give up themselves unto the profession of it, it will be hard to find an ordinance of God of another kind for their preservation therein. When the apostle took his last farewell of them who were converted by his ministry at Ephesus, he 'commended them to the word of God's grace, which,' as he judged, 'was able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified;' Acts xx. 32.

A man would think it were a more difficult work to convert men from Judaism, or paganism, any false religion, unto the profession of the gospel, than to retain them in that profession when they are initiated thereinto. For in that first work there are all sorts of prejudices and difficulties to be conflicted withal; and not the least advantage from any acknowledged principles of truth. But as to the preservation of men in the profession of truth which they have received and owned, the work on many accounts seems to be more

expedite and easy. If therefore the dispensation of the word, as it is God's ordinance unto that end, hath been a sufficient and effectual means for the fortner, what reason can be assigned that it should not be so for the latter also, without farther force or violence?

It will be said, that the first preachers of the gospel were furnished with extraordinary gifts, whereby their ministry was rendered effectual unto the first conversion of the nations. But whereas now those gifts do cease, the efficacy of the ministry doth so also, and therefore stands in need of such outward assistances as the former did not. I say, for my part, I wish it all the assistance which those unto whom it is committed can desire, so that no force be offered to the consciences or persons of other men. But why shall we not think that the ordinary gifts of the ministry are as sufficient for the ordinary work of it, as the extraordinary were for that which was extraordinary? To speak the truth, the difference lieth in persons in the discharge of their duty, and not in the things, gifts, or duties themselves. Were all those who are called, or profess themselves to be called unto the preservation of the truth of the gospel in the work of the ministry, as conscientiously diligent in the discharge of their duty, as well fitted according to the rules of the gospel with those ordinary spiritual gifts which are necessary unto their work and calling; did as fully represent the design and nature of their message unto men in a holy conversation, as those first appointed unto the conversion of the nations were, and did, according to their larger measures of grace and gifts; the work would have a proportionate success in their hands unto what it had in the beginning. But whilst those unto whom this charge is committed, do neglect the use of this means, which is the ordinance of God unto this purpose, that the truths of the gospel be preserved amongst men, whilst either they judge that the principal end of their office is to capacitate them for secular advantages, and to give them outward rest therein, with the enjoyment of those things which unto the most in this world seem desirable, and therewithal think meet to betake themselves unto other expedients for the preservation of the truth, which God hath not appointed nor sanctified to that end, it is no wonder if faith and truth fail from amongst men.

The apostle Paul foresaw that a time would come, wherein some men would 'not endure sound doctrine, but after their own hearts' lusts would heap up unto themselves teachers, having itching ears;' who should 'turn them away from the truth, and turn them unto fables;' 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. And we may see what course he prescribeth for the prevention of this evil, that it might not proceed unto a general apostacy. It must also be observed, that the advice he gives in this case, though originally directed unto one individual person who was immediately concerned, yet it lies in charge on all that are or shall be called unto the rule of, or ministry in, the church. This course he proposeth, ver. 1, 2. 5. of that chapter: 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. Watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.' This is that course and way which he prescribeth for the preservation of the truth against the corruptions of men's minds and the craft of seducers. And the charge of this duty he giveth with so great a solemnity, and urgeth with so many motives emphatically expressed, as manifest of how great moment he conceived it to be.

Perhaps this way of the preservation of the truth, and the salvation of the souls of men by continual labouring in the word and doctrine, with an undergoing of all those difficulties which attend it, is not esteemed so advisable as formerly. For what good would men's lives or preferments do unto them, if they should be obliged thus to labour in this sweaty kind of preaching? But if it be so, they must at one time or another be contented to part with the truth and all the advantages they have by the profession of it. For let men turn themselves which way they please, let them traverse their methods, and multiply their counsels to secure religion according to their apprehension, however they may hereby chain their idols as the heathens did their gods of old, to prevent their departure from them, and fix a profession of lies; the truth of the gospel, as unto any useful end of it, will be no otherwise preserved in a nation, church, or people, but by this means of God's appointment.

2. This is such a way and expedient for the preservation of the truth and the profession of the gospel, as none can have the impudence to complain of, or except against. There is in all places, among all sorts of persons, a pretence of zeal for the retaining of what they conceive to be the truth, or right in religion. But the ways which for the most part they have chosen unto that purpose, have been full of scandal unto Christian religion: so far from being rational means of preserving men in it, as that they are effectual to deter them from it. Such is that outward force which hath been now tried in this nation, as elsewhere by all sorts of persons; and wise men may easily observe what it is arrived unto. In the mean time it is openly evident, that let the end aimed at be never so good, the means used for the attaining of it are accompanied with much evil. What peace or satisfaction they have in themselves who are the prosecutors of this way, I know not. It is above my understanding to apprehend that the minds of any Christians can be thoroughly at ease, rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ, whilst they cause others to be terrified, pursued, ruined, and destroyed, merely for that which is their faith and hope in Christ Jesus. But I know not the principles of the minds of other men, the make or constitution of their consciences, nor the rules of their walking before God, much less their prevailing prejudices and interests that influence them beyond all evidence of reason to the contrary; and therefore they may have a satisfactory peace in this way, though I understand not how. On the other side, those who are practised upon, and forced to suffer in this course of proceeding, are filled with alienation from them and their profession by whom they suffer. Hence it is known what mutual animosities, hatreds, contentions, severe reflections, and dreadful scandals this way is attended withal. We see at this day what clamours and contests are raised about it, what pleas are managed against such procedures, how uncouth it is unto human nature, to suffer all extremities for that which men are fully persuaded they deserve well in of mankind; nor can any man give assurance, but that at one time or other the wheat shall be plucked up instead of tares.

But as to the way now proposed, of preserving the truth by the diligent, effectual dispensation of the word of the

gospel unto the generality of the people, who can pretend a provocation by it, or take offence at it? No mortal man will be prejudiced by it in any thing that he dares own a concernment in. The devil indeed will be enraged at it, not only as that which is designed unto the ruin of his interest and kingdom in the issue, but as that wherein he hath no share, nor can interpose his endeavours. For he is a spirit as restless and active as he is malicious, and loves not to be excluded out of any business that is on foot in the world. Wherefore although he equally hates the truth in the management of all men, yet in the way of preserving of it before mentioned, he can and doth so apparently immix himself and his effectual workings, that he is very well satisfied with it; for what he may possibly lose on the one hand in point of truth, he gains ten times more on the other in the loss of love, peace, holiness, with all the fruits of goodness, meekness, and benignity, which ought to be among men. And let him have but his hand effectually in the promotion of this loss, and have the contrary fruits to feed upon, he is little concerned with the profession of truth in this or that way of worship amongst men. Be it therefore that he is or will be enraged at this way of preserving the truth, we know that the kingdom of Christ will be no otherwise maintained in the world but by a conquest of his rage. And for those who manage the same design with him, their wrath and envy, which they dare not manifest, will but torment and consume themselves.

3. Setting aside some few instances of violence and blood, consuming the persons of men, as among the Waldenses, Bohemians, and some others, which yet were never totally prevalent; and revolutions of government attended with the like cruelties, as in the days of queen Mary in England, which was but of short continuance; no instance can be given of the defection of any church or nation from the truth, but where there was a neglect of implanting the power of the gospel on the minds and hearts of men by those unto whom that charge is committed. This sinful neglect was that which constantly opened the door unto all apostacy. Wherefore, on this foundation the weight of all useful profession of the gospel among us doth depend. And if God will be pleased to put it into the hearts of all them who are

concerned in this duty, to labour effectually therein, and to give unto the people an example of the power of the gospel, in their own holy, humble, useful, fruitful conversation among them, and shall be pleased moreover to furnish them with the gifts of his Spirit, enabling them unto a successful discharge of their duty, evangelical truth would certainly receive an unconquerable establishment among us. And it may be it is not suited unto the exigence of this season, that any of those who are called and enabled unto this work, being willing to engage their utmost in defence of the truth, especially in this way of its preservation, by leavening the minds of men with a sense of its power and worth, should be prohibited the discharge of their duty. But the purposes of God in all things must stand, and himself be humbly adored, where his 'judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.'

Again, This innate and yet uncured enmity unto things spiritual and heavenly, becomes a cause and means of apostacy from the truths of the gospel, by filling the hearts of men with a love of sin, and their lives with the fruits of it in wicked works. For men are 'alienated, and enemies in their minds' in or 'by wicked works;' Col. i. 21. The enmity which is in their minds doth operate and manifest itself in wicked works. And the alienation wherewith this enmity is accompanied, is from the life of God: Eph. iv. 18. 'Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God;' that is, the spiritual heavenly life of faith and holiness, which God requireth, and whereof he is the end and object. Of this life the truths of the gospel are the spring, rule, and measure; see Acts v. 20. Eph. iv. 24. Wherefore, when men are alienated from the life of God, and through the love of sin are given up unto wicked works, they cannot but secretly dislike and hate that truth, that spiritual and heavenly doctrine, which is the spring and rule of holiness, and whereby both the love of sin and the fruits of it in wicked works, are everlastingly condemned. Let then men pretend and profess what they please, whilst this enmity is in them as a predominant principle of sin and wicked conversation, they are practically and really enemies unto the gospel itself. And where any persons are so, it is easily imaginable, how ready and prone they will be to part with it on any oc-

casion. For none will retain that in their minds which is useless to them, and troublesome unto their principal inclinations, any longer than they have a fair opportunity to part with it. That this frame of mind is an effectual obstruction unto the due receiving of the gospel, our Saviour expressly declares, John iii. 19, 20. 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh unto the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' Wherever the power of sin abideth, and men are engaged in the practice of it, so as that their deeds are evil, they will not receive the light of the gospel; that is, in its own nature and power, and for its proper ends. And when they are by conviction or any other means wrought unto a compliance with it, yet they do it but partially and hypocritically, nor can do it otherwise whilst their deeds are evil. So was it with them who are said to believe in Christ, being some way convinced of the truth of his doctrine, yet would they not confess him, because 'they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God;' John xii. 42, 43. By the reigning power of this one sin of ambitious hypocrisy, most of them were kept off from any assent unto the gospel, as our Saviour speaks unto them, 'How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' John v. 44. With the residue, who were not able wholly to withstand their convictions, it prevailed so far as that they should not receive it sincerely, but partially and hypocritically. Now, that which so effectually keeps the most from giving any admission at all unto the gospel, and which suffers none to receive it in a due manner, will easily prevail where it abides in its power unto a total relinquishment of it when occasion is offered.

Seeing therefore that all those whose deeds are evil, who through the enmity that is in their minds, do give up themselves in their lives unto wicked works, are really alienated from the truths of the gospel, they are and will be ready at all times for a defection from them. For being kept under the dominion of sin, they have no real benefit by them, but rather find them inconsistent with their principal interests and chiefest joys.

Hence is that description which the apostle giveth of

those who were evangelically converted unto God, Rom. vi. 17, 18. 'God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin: but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' There is no obedience from the heart unto the gospel, no possibility of being cast into the mould of the doctrine delivered in it, unless we be made free from the service of sin.

We may therefore, without scruple, fix this as one principal means and cause of that apostacy from the truth of the gospel, which hath been in the world, and which is yet deplorably progressive. Men who love sin, and live in sin, whose works are wicked, and whose deeds are evil, are all of them in their hearts alienated from the spiritual holy doctrines of the gospel, and will undoubtedly, on any occasion of temptation or trial, fall away from the profession of them.

What reason have we to hope or judge, that drunkards, swearers, unclean persons, covetous, proud, ambitious, boasters, vain sensualists, and the like enemies of the cross of Christ, should adhere unto the truth with any constancy, if a trial should befall them? 'Look diligently,' saith the apostle, 'lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright;' Heb. xii. 16. Esau's birthright was his right unto and interest in the promise of the gospel made unto Abraham. This, he being a profane person, when he was pressed with a little hunger, parted withal, for one morsel of meat. And if others, saith the apostle, are like him, profane persons, fornicators, or such as live in any course of sin, if a temptation befall them, and their lusts call to be satisfied, they will for morsels of bread, for the smallest earthly advantages, part with their interest in and profession of the gospel. So he tells us of them, who having 'put away a good conscience did make shipwreck of the faith;' 1 Tim. i. 19. After men have debauched their consciences by living in sin, they may for awhile speed on their voyage with full sails of profession; but if a storm comes, if a trial befall them, if they meet with a rock or shelf in their way, they quickly make shipwreck of the faith, and lose that, whatever else they labour to preserve.

What should secure such persons unto any constancy in

profession? for whilst they are in this condition, it is altogether indifferent unto them, as to their present or future advantage, what religion they are of; or whether they are of any at all or no. It is true, one way of religion may more harden them in sin, lay more prejudices against and hinderances of their conversion, than another; but no religion can do them good, or yield them the least eternal advantage, whilst they abide in that condition. It will be all one at the last day what religion wicked and ungodly sinners have been of; unless it be that the profession of the truth will prove an aggravation of their sins; Rom. ii. 11, 12.

Besides, when a temptation unto the relinquishment of the truth doth befall them, it hath nothing but a few traditional prejudices to contend withal. When they are taken off from them, and begin to search themselves for reasons why they should adhere unto the truth which they have outwardly professed, they quickly find in their own hearts a predominant dislike and hatred of that light and truth which they are solicited to part withal. For every man, as our Saviour testifieth, 'hateth the light, whose deeds are evil.'

This is that which abroad in the world hath lost the gospel so many princes, nobles, and great men, who for awhile made profession of it. This is that which is of such dismal abode at this day, as to the danger of a general apostacy. All sorts of persons do give up themselves unto the service of sin. The complaint of the prophet is not unsuited to our occasion, Isa. i. 4—6. Many are openly flagitious, beyond precedent or example among the heathen. Worldliness, pride, ambition, vanity, in all its variety of occasions and objects, with sensuality of life, have even overrun the world. And that which is of the most dreadful consideration, is that the sins of many are accompanied with the highest aggravation of all provocations; namely, that they proclaim them like Sodom, and hide them not, but glory in their shame. In all these things, men do really (though not in words) proclaim that they are weary of the gospel, and are ready to leave it, some for any pretence of religion, some for none at all.

And this is the most dangerous posture that any place, church, or people can be found in. For whereas men are of themselves ready and prone unto a spiritual revolt and de-

fection; when this ariseth from, and is promoted by, the love of sin and a life therein, God is ready also penally to give them up unto such delusions, as shall turn them off from the gospel. So the apostle expresseth it, 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. 'They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' Where men, under the profession of the truth, will continue profligate in sin, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness, God will not always suffer the gospel to be prostituted to give them countenance in their wickedness, but will judicially give them up unto such delusions, as shall flood them away into an open apostacy from it.

This was the great cause of that general and almost catholic apostacy, that was in the world before the reformation. The body of the Christian people, by such means and on such occasions as shall be afterward declared, were grown worldly, sensual, wicked, and obstinate in sin. The complaints hereof are left on record in the writings of many in those days. And in vain it was for any to attempt to reduce them unto a conformity unto the gospel, especially considering that the most of their guides were no less infected than themselves. Chrysostom was almost the only person, at least he was the most eminent, who set himself in his ministry to stem, if it were possible, the rising tide of impiety and wickedness among all sorts of persons. But instead of any success, his holy endeavours ended in his own banishment and death. All degrees and orders of men undertook the patronage of public sinning against him, and to his ruin. Wherefore, there remained but two ways of dealing with the generality of men in such a condition. The one was, according to the advice of the apostle, to 'turn away or withdraw from them,' 2 Tim. iii. 5. so leaving them out of the communion of the church; the other was to accommodate religion unto their temper and lusts, whereby a face and appearance of Christianity might be preserved among them. And the generality of their leaders preferring their interest before their duty, the latter way was chosen and gradually promoted.

Hence were opinions and practices invented, advanced,

and taken into religion, that might accommodate men in their lusts, or give countenance and pretended relief unto them who were resolved to live in their sins. Such were auricular confession, penances, absolutions, commutations of all sorts, missatical sacrifices for the living and the dead, the church's treasury of merit and power of pardon, suffrage and help of saints, especially purgatory, with all its appendages.

Hereby was the apostacy completed; for men being grown carnal and wicked, there appeared no way to keep them up unto the profession of the gospel, but by the corrupting the whole doctrine and worship of it, that their lusts might be some way accommodated. To this end, external things were substituted in the room of things internal, having the same names given unto them; ecclesiastical things in the room of things spiritual; outward offices, orders, and multiplied sacraments, with their efficacy, by virtue of the work wrought, in the place of real conversion unto God, purity of heart, with strict universal holiness; disciplines and corporeal severities, in the room of evangelical repentance and mortification. Nor could the lusts of men have possibly a higher accommodation, whilst any pretence of religion was necessary to be preserved. So formerly did wickedness of life lead the way into apostacy from the truth. And the whole of the papal apostacy may be reduced unto these two heads: First, An accommodation of the doctrine and worship of the gospel unto the carnal minds and lusts of men, with the state of their consciences that ensued thereon. And, secondly, The accommodation of the lusts, ignorance, and superstition of men, unto the interests and worldly advantage of the pope and his clergy.

And herein lieth the danger of this age. The great design of the generality of men is to live in sin with as little trouble at present, and as little fear of what is future, as they can arrive unto. And there are but two ways whereby such a posture of mind may be attempted.

The one is by obliterating all notions of good and evil, all sense of future rewards and punishments, or of God's government in the world. This, some in all ages have endeavoured. For 'the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God:' and thereon are 'they corrupt, and do abominable

works;' Psal. xiv. 1. And no age could ever give more instances of this affected atheism than that wherein we live. Neither do any deceive themselves into it, but merely with this design, to live in sin without control from themselves, which is the last restraint they can acquit themselves of. And some of them do please themselves with the attainment of them in the psalmist: 'The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts;' Psal. x. 4. But God hath inlaid the minds of men, antecedently unto all actings of their wills and affections, with such a tenacious and unanswerable witness to the contrary, that it is very difficult for any to bring themselves unto any tolerable satisfaction this way. For 'that which may be known of God is manifest in themselves,' whether they will or no; Rom. i. 19. Neither can they free themselves from prevailing apprehensions, that 'it is the judgment of God, that they who commit sin are worthy of death;' ver. 32. Wherefore we have not many instances of men who pretend a senselessness of these things out of principle, or that they find no disquietment on the account of sin. And by the most of them this is but pretended: their outward boasting is but a sorry plaster for their inward fears and vexations. Nor will the pretended security of such impious persons endure the shock of the least of those surprisals, calamities, and dangers, which human nature is obnoxious unto in this life, much less of death itself. The end therefore mentioned, be it never so earnestly desired, is not this way to be attained.

Another way therefore must be found out unto the same end, and this must be by a religion. Nothing but religion can convert men from sin, and nothing but religion can secure them therein. To this purpose is that of our apostle, 'In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;' 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. Had they the power of religion in them, they could not give themselves up unto the pursuit of

such brutish lusts; and had they not some form or other of it, they could not be secure in their practice. For,

Sin and conscience are stubborn in their conflict whilst immediately opposed; conscience pleading that there should be no sin; and sin contending that there may be no conscience: but as nature is corrupted they will both comply with an accommodation. Wherefore a device to satisfy sin, and to deceive conscience, will not fail of a ready entertainment. And this is the design in part or in whole of every false way in religion that men apostatize into from the purity and simplicity of the gospel. See 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. One way or other is proposed to take men off from the necessity of regeneration, and the renovation of their nature into the image of God in the first place. For this is that lion in the way, which deters all sorts of sluggards from attempting any thing seriously in religion. And whereas our Lord Jesus Christ hath placed the necessity of it on the first entrance into the kingdom of God; there is no false way of religion, but its first design is to destroy its nature, or take away its necessity. Hence, some would have it to be only baptism, with the grace it confers by the work wrought. Some substitute a moral reformation of life in the room of it, which, as they suppose, is sufficiently severe. And the light within makes all thoughts of it useless. For if this point be not well secured, all ensuing attempts to accommodate men with a religion will be in vain. It will still be returning on them, that unless they are 'born again, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Internal sanctification of the whole person, the mortification of all the motions of sin that are in the flesh, with that universal obedience which is required unto the life of God, must also be provided for or against, and yet conscience be satisfied therewithal. Wherefore, if you can obtain, that persons who live in sin, and are resolved so to do, not troubling themselves about these things, shall suppose that they may be secured eternally in such a way of religion as you propose unto them; that what is wanting in themselves shall be done for them by absolutions and masses, and various supplies out of the church's treasury, with the great reserve of purgatory when things come to the worst; there is no great fear (especially if some other circumstances fall in also to promote the design), but that you will find

them very ductile and pliable unto your desires. Add hereunto, that the ways whereby any may be interested in these efficacious means of eternal salvation, namely, by confession, penances, and alms, are possible, yea, easy to persons who never intend to leave their sins. Of this sort are the most of those visibly who every day fall off to the Roman church. And it were to be desired, that the wickedness of men did not give grounds of fearing additions to their number. For if there be no assurance of the constancy of men in the profession of the truth, unless their souls and lives are transformed into the image of it (as there is not), certainly these ways wherein men are furiously engaged in the pursuit of their lusts, must needs be perilous, and may, without the especial help of divine grace, bring forth a fatal defection.

CHAP. V.

Darkness and ignorance, another cause of apostacy.

THE second spring or cause of defection from the gospel in any kind, is that spiritual darkness and ignorance which abides in the minds of men, under the profession of the truth.

The gospel may fall under a double consideration: First, Of the things themselves that are contained, revealed, and proposed therein. These are the material objects of our faith. Secondly, With respect unto the doctrinal way of their declaration. With respect unto the first, there is a spiritual darkness on the minds of all men by nature, so as that they cannot discern them in their own native form and beauty. With respect unto the latter, men are said to be ignorant, namely, when they do not in a due manner understand and comprehend the doctrines of the gospel; and so perish for want of knowledge. These things being of a distinct consideration, and of different influence into this pernicious event, the first shall be first spoken unto.

1. That there is such a spiritual darkness on the minds of men by nature, and wherein their depravation by sin doth

principally consist, is fully testified in the Scripture, as I have at large elsewhere evinced. Hence all men grant, so far as I know, that there is need of spiritual illumination, to enable us to discern spiritual things in a due manner, though all are not agreed in the nature and causes of that illumination. But to deny the thing itself, is to deny the gospel, and to make the promises of God of none effect. Now, where illumination is needful, there darkness is to be removed; for the end of the bringing in of light is to dispel darkness. Wherefore such a depravation of the minds of men in spiritual darkness must be acknowledged, or the gift and grace of God in illumination must be rejected. And they by whom it is done, do by their own blindness give new evidence unto the truth which they do oppose; there being no more certain demonstration of the power of darkness in any, than for them to affirm that they stand in no need of light to be communicated unto them by the effectual operations of the Spirit of God. As to the nature of this illumination, I shall not here dispute, but take it at present for granted, that it is an act of his power who of old 'commanded light to shine out of darkness, shining into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ;' 2 Cor. iv. 6.

2. There is a glory and beauty in those spiritual things which are the subjects of the truths of the gospel. There is in them the wisdom of God, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery,' 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7. yea, 'the manifold wisdom of God;' Eph. iii. 10. The glory of the Lord, which is represented unto believers in the glass of the gospel, 2 Cor. iii. 18. or 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;' chap. iv. 6. Things expressly beyond discovery by the use of any means merely natural whatever; 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. Even the philosophers of old contended that there was a beauty in all truth, which would engage the minds and affections of men unto it, were they able to discern it. And if they saw and granted this in things natural and moral, which are earthly and exposed unto the common reason of mankind, how much more must it be granted of the truth of things heavenly, spiritual, and divine? See John iii. 12. In brief, whatever there is of divine glory or excellency in the divine nature itself, in any or all of its holy properties, in the great and most glorious effect of them in the person and grace of

Christ, in the renovation of our nature unto the image of God, in the divine life of faith and obedience, it is proposed unto us in the truths of the gospel.

3. Whatever doctrinal proposition may be made of these things unto the minds of men, yet the things themselves cannot be comprehended nor spiritually discerned without the illumination of the Holy Ghost before mentioned. Hence it follows, that men may be instructed in the doctrines of truth, yet continuing under the power of natural darkness, not discern the things themselves in their own spiritual nature and glory, nor have any experience of their power and efficacy. This all the prayers of holy men in the Scripture for spiritual light and instruction, all the promises of God savingly to enlighten the minds of men, and the descriptions given of that work of his grace whereby he doth effect it, do undeniably evince. One consideration will be sufficient unto our purpose. Whoever hath a spiritual view and knowledge of these things, his mind will be and is certainly changed and transformed into the image of them. So the apostle tells us expressly, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 'We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.' They are cast into the same mould with the doctrine whereunto they are given up; Rom. vi. 17. The mind is united unto the things so discerned, and the image of them is so brought forth therein, as that there is an exact conformity between them. But we see by open and palpable experience, that notwithstanding the knowledge which many have of spiritual things, their minds continue carnal and fleshly, filled with corrupt and depraved affections, and are no way changed into the image or likeness of the things themselves. There needs no farther demonstration that men have never had a spiritual view of, or insight into, the glory of gospel truths, be their doctrinal knowledge of them what it will, than this, That their minds are not renewed thereby, nor transformed into the likeness of them.

4. Where it is thus with men, they have no stable grounds whereon to abide in the profession of the truth against temptation, opposition, or seduction. For their steadfastness must be an effect of such an assurance in their minds of the truth of the things which they do believe, as

will be prevalent against all that force and artifice wherewith they may be assaulted, and such as will not suffer their own minds to be indifferent, careless, or negligent about them. But whence should this arise? Assurance from outward natural sense in spiritual things we are not capable of; nor are they evidenced unto our minds by rational demonstration. All the full persuasion or assurance we can have of them, which will be prevalent against temptations and oppositions, ariseth from such a spiritual view of them as gives an experience of their reality, power, and efficacy upon our minds. And this respects both the renovation of the mind itself in light and faith, the adhesion of the will unto the things known and believed, with a holy, heavenly, unconquerable love, and the constant approbation of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in all things. Hence this assurance, though it be neither that of sense, nor that of reason, yet in the Scripture is compared with them, and preferred above them, as that which giveth the mind a more certain satisfaction than they can do, although it be of another kind. And without this it is impossible that men should attain any such evidence or full persuasion of that evangelical truth which they may profess, as to secure them in their profession in such a juncture of circumstances and occasions as they may fall into.

Here therefore I place another means and cause of apostacy from the truth of the gospel, after it hath been received and professed. Multitudes in all ages have been instructed in the truth; some have been learned and knowing in the doctrines of it. But whereas by reason of their darkness, as being destitute of spiritual illumination, they did not discern the things themselves which they assented unto, in their supernatural, heavenly nature and glory, and thereon had no experience of their proper power and efficacy on their own minds, affections, and lives, they could not have any such evidence of their truth, as would upon trials confirm their adherence unto them, or secure them from apostacy.

Had the minds of men been transformed in their renovation to 'prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God;' had they by 'beholding of spiritual things

been changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord;' they would not have abandoned the most important doctrines of the gospel, as we know them to have done, nor have embraced foolish imaginations in their stead, on every plausible courtship and address unto their fancies. How came men under the papal apostacy gradually to desert the principal truths of the gospel, and all the spiritual glory of its worship? Not discerning the internal glory and beauty of things evangelical and purely divine, not having an experience of the power of them in and upon their own minds, they chose to comply with, and give admission unto, such things whose outward painted beauty they could discern, and whose effects on their natural and carnal affections they had experience of.

We have seen in all ages, that men learned and skilled in the doctrines of the truth, so as that they might have been looked on as pillars of it, yet to have been as forward as any unto apostacy from it, when they have been tried; yea, such have been the leaders of others thereinto. So many of this sort fell into Arianism and Pelagianism of old, as some have done unto Socinianism, and many unto popery in our days. When such fall away, usually they overthrow the faith of some, and shake the confidence of others. But the apostle gives a double relief against this temptation: First, The stability of God's purpose in the preservation of the elect, and the means of preservation in the holiness of them that believe; 1 Tim. ii. 17—19. And we may be assured concerning them all, that they never had that intuition into, nor comprehension of, spiritual things which alone could secure their stability. They never saw so much or that in them for which they should be preferred above all other things. No man who forsakes the truth ever saw the glory of it, or had experience of its power. 'They went out from us, but were not of us' (saith the apostle, of such persons), 'for if they had been of us' (whose fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ) 'they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us;' 1 John ii. 19.

Thus when the apostle had described the woful apostacy of some among the Hebrews, he adds concerning them

whose preservation he believed, 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation;' Heb. vi. 9. Whatever knowledge men may have of the doctrines of the gospel, and whatever profession they may make, unless they have withal those things which are inseparable from salvation, such as is the saving illumination of the Holy Ghost, whereby the darkness of our minds is removed, there can be no assurance that they will always quit themselves like men, and 'stand fast in the faith.' And this consideration doth not a little evidence the danger of a defection from the truth which attends the days wherein we live.

For, first, It is from hence that we have such a numerous generation of sceptics in religion among us. A sort of men who pretend not to renounce or forsake the truth, only they will talk and dispute about it with the greatest indifferency as to what is true or false. The Scripture, the holy Trinity, the person of Christ, his offices, the nature of justification and grace, whether it be or be not, this or that church, all or any in the world as to their profession and worship, are weighed in the defiled tottering scales of bold irreverend discourses. For some reasons known to themselves, this sort of persons will own the public profession of religion, perhaps be teachers in it. But on all occasions they fully manifest that they are utterly ignorant of the fundamental differences between truth and error, and so give no firm assent unto what they do profess. For this difference lieth in their glory and beauty in themselves, and in their power and efficacy towards us. Spiritual heavenly truth, by its relation unto the being, infinite wisdom, goodness, love, and grace of God, by the characters of all these things impressed on it and represented by it, is glorious, amiable, and desirable. All error, as an effect of darkness, and by its relation unto Satan as the head of the apostacy which drew off our minds from the original essential truth, is distorted, deformed, and brings the mind into confusion. Truth is powerful, and effectual to conform the soul unto God, and to principle it with a love of, and power unto obedience. Error turns the mind aside into crooked and by-paths of folly or superstition, or pride and self-advancement. Were men practically acquainted with this difference between

truth and error, it would take away that indifferency in their minds unto them, which this sceptical humour doth discover. Truth so known in its nature and efficacy will beget that reverence, that love, that sacred esteem of itself in the souls of men, as they shall not dare to prostitute it to be bandied up and down with every foolish imagination. And from this sort of men, who are commonly the most bold and forward in undertaking the conduct of others, by a pretended generous contempt of their narrow principles, groundless scruples, and pusillanimous fears, nothing is to be expected but a wise and safe compliance with any ways or means of apostacy from the truth which shall be advantageously presented unto them.

And by the means of this darkness, it is easy to conceive how uncertain and unstable the minds of the generality of men, who perhaps also are somewhat ignorant (whereof we shall treat afterward), must needs be in their assent unto the truth and the profession of it. They are no way able to discover it in such a way or manner as to give them an assurance which will be infallibly victorious against temptations and oppositions; nor can they have that holy love unto it, which will secure their minds and affections from being enticed and ravished from it. But all the difference between truth and error which they can discern, lying in bare different notions and apprehensions, wherein also they are dark and unskilled, it is no wonder if at any time they make an easy transcursion from one to the other. So did the body of the people lose the truth gradually under the papal defection without any great complaint, yea, with much complacency and satisfaction. And it is to be feared, that multitudes are ready at once to steer the same course if occasion be offered unto them.

From this consideration we may rectify the seeming solecism that is in the profession of religion, or the professors of it. Truth in every kind is the only guide of the mind in all its actings: wherein it proceeds not according unto it, it is always out of the way. Divine truth is the sole conduct of the mind in all its actings towards God: it is the only fountain, immediate cause, and rule of all our obedience. But yet whereas in other things men generally walk in the light of those sparks of truth which they have

received, we see that many by whom divine truth is owned and professed in its greatest purity and highest discovery, are ofttimes no less wicked and vicious in their lives, no less enemies unto holiness, no less barren and unfruitful in those good and useful works it guides and directs unto, than those who having the greatest aversation from it, are under the conduct of other principles, erroneous and superstitious. Thus the lives of the common sort of Protestants are no better than those of the Papists; nor theirs to be compared with some of the Mahometans: yea, by the power of false and superstitious apprehensions imposed on their minds and consciences, some are carried out unto greater and more frequent acts of bounty and charity, of the mortification of the flesh, the denial of its sensual appetites and satisfactions, than are to be found among the most who profess themselves to be under the conduct and rule of truth. Hence no profession of religion, be it never so corrupt or foolish, is advanced amongst us, but instantly (at least for a season, and whilst it is new) it pretends an advantage as unto life and conversation against the truth measured by the lives of its common professors. Yea, this is made the principal motive and argument to prevail with honest and well-meaning people unto a compliance with the profession of their way, because of the effects which (as it is pretended) it produceth in their lives and conversations, above those which profess the truth. And how prevalent this pretence hath been among us, is known unto all.

Wherefore, I say, we cannot allow that the lives of the common sort of professors, should be esteemed a just and due representation of the doctrine which they do profess. It is true, that where it is not so, men will have no benefit by their profession, nor will they be steadfast in it when a trial shall befall them. Where the mind is internally and really conformed unto the truth, there the actions of the life may be allowed to represent sincerely, though not perfectly, the truths which are believed. And he is no firm Christian in any kind, he is brought into no spiritual order, whose mind doth not receive by the Spirit of Christ the transforming influence of evangelical truth, and who exerts not the power of it in a holy conversation, so as that he is not un-

willing that what he believeth, may be impartially judged by what he liveth, as to sincerity, though not as to perfection. But if we should allow the lives of men in general to be a rule whereby judgment might be safely passed in these things, it cannot be denied but that sometimes, and in some ages and places, error would (at least for a season) carry it in glory and reputation from the truth, yea, the light of nature from grace, tradition from the Scripture, and the Alcoran from the gospel.

But we have sufficient ground of exceptions unto this interpretation and exposition of the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that without the least apology for the ungodly lives of its professors. Among these, that now insisted on is of the first rank and evidence. Multitudes of those who profess the truth never had a view of its spiritual glory, because of the darkness of their minds, and therefore have no experience of its power and efficacy; nor are their hearts and lives influenced or guided by it. For the gospel will not have its effects on the minds of men, unless it first communicates unto them those internal spiritual principles which are necessary unto all the operations that it doth require. Put this new wine into old bottles, and all is lost, both bottles and wine also. The doctrine of the gospel taken in notionally into the old unrenewed corrupt minds of men, is utterly lost unto all the proper ends of it. And wherever there is a reformation of life, with any diligent attendance unto duties moral or religious, wrought in persons by the light and dispensation of the gospel, they are the immediate effects of those doctrines which it hath in common with the light of nature and the law in its power, and not of those which are peculiarly its own. And this they seem to understand well enough, who finding either in their own experience, or from the observation they have made of others, how ineffectual the truth of gospel mysteries is towards the minds of carnal men, have upon the matter abandoned the preaching of it, and have taken up only with those principles which are suited unto the light of nature and convictions of the law.

The holiness which the gospel requireth, is the transforming of our whole souls into the image and likeness of God, with the actings of renewed nature in a universal ap-

probation of his good, perfect, and acceptable will; Rom. xii. 2. But this will not be effected unless we can 'behold the glory of God' in it, whereby alone we may be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory;' 2 Cor. iii. 18. Nor can we so behold that glory, unless he 'who commanded light to shine out of darkness, do shine into our hearts to give us the knowledge of it;' 2 Cor. iv. 6. Hence is the doctrine of it ineffectual in the hearts and upon the lives of many by whom its truth is openly professed.

It is otherwise with every false religion. The motives which they make use of, and the instruments they apply unto the hearts of men to effect the reformation of their lives, and to engage them unto such works and duties as they require, are all of them suited either unto their natural light, or unto their superstitions, fears, desires, pride, and other depraved affections. Those of the first sort, namely, such as are suited unto natural light, are common in some degree or measure unto all religion whatever, be it on other accounts true or false. Every thing that is called religion pretends at least unto the improvement of natural light, as did the philosophers among the heathen of old. It urgeth also the law so far as it is made known unto them, though by other presumptions and prejudices some do abate and take off from its force and efficacy, making void the commandments of God through their own traditions. Whatever change is wrought or effected on the minds and lives of men, by virtue of these principles, and motives taken from them, doth not belong unto any one way in religion more than another. Nor is it to be accounted unto the glory or advantage of any of them. In these things Mahometanism, and all false ways in Christianity, have an equal share and interest; unless where, by some corrupt opinions of their own, men deprave the light of nature, and the rule of the law itself.

Some finding, as they say, more of justice, temperance, veracity, righteousness in dealings, with common usefulness unto mankind, among Turks and Banians than among the common sort of Christians, do foolishly begin to think, that their religion is better than Christianity. But as this scandal will be sorely required at the hands of them who give it by their flagitious lives, so it is foolishly and wickedly

taken by others. For those truths and laws which produce these effects in them, are common unto all religions, and are equally suited unto the light and reason of all mankind; and have more evidence and efficacy communicated unto them by the gospel, than by any other kind of religion whatever. And so it is with them among ourselves who would plead an advantage unto their profession by the effects of it in their lives as to a moral conversation, when they can pretend unto no real motive thereunto, namely, unto what is good and useful, and not mere affectation and hypocrisy, but what is owned and pressed in the doctrine of the gospel which we adhere unto. The differences therefore that are in this kind, are not from the doctrines men profess, but they arise from the persons themselves who embrace them, with their various lusts, inclinations, and temptations.

It is evident, therefore, that whatever there is of moral good, duty, or usefulness among men in any false way of religion, it all proceeds from those principles, and is the effect of those motives, which are owned and improved in that which is true. And it may be easily evinced, that they are more cultivated and cleared, have more evidence, life, light, and power given them by the truths of the gospel, than by any other means or way whatever. And where they have not an equal effect upon those who profess that truth, which they have on some by whom it is deserted, it is from the power of their own cursed lusts and carnal security. The difference on the part of religion itself consists in what is superadded unto these general principles by any notions of it. Now this in every false religion is what is suited unto the natural principles of men's minds, their innate pride, vanity, curiosity, superstition, irregular hopes and fears. Such among the Romanists are the doctrines of merit, of outward disciplines, of satisfactions for sin, of confession, penances, of purgatory, and the like. They were all of them found out to put some awe on the minds, and to have some influence on the lives of men, who had lost all sense of the principles and motives of gospel obedience; though some considerable respect was had unto the benefit and advantage of them by whom they were invented; for why should men labour and beat their brains merely for others,

without some income and revenue of advantage unto themselves? And it is no wonder if they produce in many, as they have done, great appearing acts of devotion, many outward works of bounty and charity, yea, in some, real austerities of life and renunciations of the pleasures of the world. I doubt not but that the sensual wicked paradise of Mahomet, doth effectually prevail in the minds of many of his followers unto that kind of virtuous and devout life, which they suppose may bring them unto its enjoyment.

The inquiry then on the whole matter is, Wherefore the truths of the gospel do not produce (in all by whom they are professed) effects as much more excellent than those mentioned, as truth is more excellent than error, heavenly light than superstition, faith than frightful apprehensions of feigned torments, true peace and tranquillity of mind than outward reputation and glory? And the principal reason hereof is, because such persons as are barren in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do not discern those truths in their spiritual nature, nor can therefore take in the power and efficacy of them on their souls.

There is a holiness, obedience, and fruitfulness in good works, wrought, preserved, and maintained by the truth of the gospel in them who are truly regenerated and sanctified thereby, who receive the proper efficacy of it on their minds and souls, which differs in the whole kind and nature from any thing which the principles and motives before mentioned, which have their efficacy from their suitableness unto the depraved affections of men's minds, can produce. And this alone is acceptable with God; but it must be granted, that where men are ignorant of the power, and unacquainted with the internal efficacy of the gospel, their lives under the profession of the truth may be as bad, and it is a great wonder they are not worse than those of the Papists, of the most erroneous persons, or even of the Mahometans themselves. For they have many superstitious imaginations and false principles, that are suited to put some outward restraint upon their lusts, and to press them unto actions praiseworthy in themselves. But these being no way influenced by such apprehensions, and being not under the power of gospel truth, it is a wonder, I say, if they exceed them not in all manner of wicked conversation.

It is not merely the outward profession of the truth, but the inward power of it, that is either useful unto the world or the souls of men.

And hence it is that the preaching of any person, which principally dwelleth on, and argueth from the things which the light of nature can of itself reach unto, and the convictions which are by the law, is better accepted with, and appears more useful unto, multitudes of common professors, than the declaration of the mysteries of the gospel is. For such things are suited unto the natural conceptions of men, and the working of their own reasons, which gives them a sense of what efficacy they have; but, being in the dark unto the mysteries of the gospel, they neither see their excellency, nor experience their power. Nevertheless they and they only are the true spring, cause, and rule of all acceptable obedience, even 'the power of God unto salvation in them that do believe.' From the whole it appears how prone such persons must be unto an apostacy from the truth, who have no spiritual light to discern its glory, nor to let in the power of it upon their souls.

If then we would be established in the truth, if we would stand fast in the faith, if we would be preserved from the danger of that defection from the gospel which the world is prone, disposed, and inclined unto, it must be our principal endeavour to have a spiritual acquaintance with the things themselves that are declared in the doctrine of truth which we do profess, and to have an experience of their efficacy upon our own souls. Mere notions of truth, or the knowledge of the doctrines of it, enabling us to talk of them, or dispute for them, will not preserve us. And although this spiritual light be the grace, promise, and gift of God, yet is it that which we are to endeavour after in a way of duty. And the directions ensuing may contribute somewhat towards the right discharge of our duty herein.

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth. For this end is he promised by our Saviour unto his disciples, and there are no teachings like his. If we learn and receive the truth of the gospel merely in the power and ability of our natural faculties, as we do other things, we shall not abide constant unto them in spiritual trials. What we learn of ourselves in spiritual things, we

receive only in the outward form of it; what we are taught by the Spirit of God we receive in its power. The apostle grants that the spirit of man, his mind, reason, and understanding is able to conceive of and apprehend the things of man, things merely natural, civil, or moral, which are cognate unto human nature. But, saith he, 'the things of God,' the mystery of his wisdom, love, and grace, in Christ Jesus, 'are known only unto the Spirit of God,' and by him are they revealed unto them that do believe; 1 Cor. ii. 9—12. Without his especial aid men may, by their natural sagacity and industry, attain an acquaintance with the doctrines of truth, so as to handle them (like the schoolmen) with incredible subtlety and curiosity. But they may be far enough, for all that, from an establishing knowledge of spiritual things. That horrible neglect which is among Christians of this one duty of earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit of Christ; that scorn which is cast upon it by some, and that self-confidence in opposition unto it which prevails in the most, sufficiently manifests of what nature is their knowledge of the truth, and what is like to become of it when a trial shall befall them. The least spark of saving knowledge inlaid in the minds of the poorest believers by the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost, will be more effectual unto their own sanctification, and more prevalent against oppositions, than the highest notions or most subtle reasonings that men have attained in leaning unto their own understanding. Wherefore the Scripture abounds in examples, instances, and directions for prayer unto this end, that we may have the assistances of the Holy Spirit in learning of the truth of the mysteries of the gospel, without which we cannot do so in a due manner. Eph. i. 16—20. 'Making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly

places.' Chap. iii. 14—19. 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.' Col. ii. 1—3. 'For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

2. Rest not in any notions of truth, unless you find that you have learned it as it is in Jesus. What it is to learn the truth 'as it is in Jesus,' the apostle fully declares, Eph. iv. 20—24. 'But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' This it is to learn the truth as it is in Jesus; namely, together with the knowledge of it, to have an experience of its power and efficacy, in the mortification of sin, in the renovation of our natures, and transforming the whole soul into the image of God in righteousness and the holinessof truth. When men learn that they may know, and are satisfied with what they know, without an endeavour to find the life and power of what they know in their own hearts, their knowledge is of little use, and their assent unto the truth will have no stability accompanying of it. The immediate end (with respect unto us) of the whole revelation of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, is, that it may put forth a spiritual practical power in our souls, and that we may do the things which are so revealed unto

us. Where this is neglected, where men content themselves with a bare speculation of spiritual truths, they do what lies in them to frustrate the end, and 'reject the counsel of God' in them. If therefore we would know any evangelical truths in a due manner, if we would have that evidence and assurance of them in our minds which may secure our profession against temptations and oppositions, let us not rest in any apprehensions of truth, whose efficacy we have no experience of in our hearts, nor think that we know any more of the mysteries of the gospel than we find effectually working in the renovation of our minds, and the transforming of our souls into the image of the glory of God in Christ.

3. Learn to esteem more of a little knowledge which discovers itself in its effects to be sanctifying and saving, than of the highest attainments in notions and speculations, though gilded and set off by the reputation of skill, subtlety, eloquence, wit, and learning, which do not evidence themselves by alike operations. We are fallen into days wherein men of all sorts, sects, and parties, are vying for the reputation of skill, ability, knowledge, subtlety, and cunning in disputes about religion. And few there are who are cast under such disadvantages by apparent want of learning, but that they hope to make it up one way or other, so as to think as well of their own knowledge and abilities as of other men's. He who hath learned to be meek, humble, lowly, patient, self-denying, holy, zealous, peaceable, to purify his heart, and to be useful in his life, is indeed the person who is best acquainted with evangelical truth. Wherefore let this knowledge be esteemed both in ourselves and others above all that proud, presumptuous, notional, puffing knowledge, which sets up for so great a reputation in the world, and we shall have experience of a blessed success in our pursuit of it.

4. Be not satisfied without a discovery of such a goodness, excellency, and beauty in spiritual things as may attract your hearts unto them, and cause you to cleave unto them with unconquerable love and delight. This is that necessary, inseparable adjunct, property, fruit, or effect of faith, without which it is not essentially differenced from the faith of devils. That knowledge, that perception and understanding of the truth, which doth not present the

things known, believed, perceived, as lovely, excellent, and desirable unto the will and affections, is a 'cloud without water,' which every wind of temptation will scatter and blow away. Do not therefore suppose that you have learned any thing of God in Christ, of the mystery of his grace, of his acceptable and perfect will; unless you see therein that evidence of infinite wisdom, goodness, holiness, love, in all things so suited unto the eternal glory of God, and advantage of your own souls in the uttermost rest, peace, and satisfaction that they are capable of, as that you may admire, adore, delight in them, and cleave unto them with a holy, prevalent, unconquerable love. When you do so, then will you be established in the truth, and be able to bid defiance unto the artifices of Satan, with the solicitations of men, that would withdraw or separate you from it. But I will not farther digress in these discourses.

Ignorance is another occasion of apostacy from the truth, which was named under this head of the depravation of the minds of men. It is the want of a due perception, understanding, or knowledge of the principal doctrines of the gospel, with the evidence which is given unto them, and the use of them in the Scriptures, that we intend hereby. A general knowledge of some doctrines, without an acquaintance with their grounds and reasons, their use and effects in the life of God, is of no value in these things. When persons know not in religion what they ought to know, as they ought to know it, or what it is their duty to know, and without the knowledge whereof they can perform no other duty of religion in a right manner, then are they culpably ignorant, and so as to be exposed unto all other evils that may befall them. For whether this be for want of due instruction from others, or want of diligence in themselves to learn, the event is equally pernicious. In the first way the Holy Ghost assures us, that 'where there is no vision the people perish;' Prov. xxix. 18. The people will suffer where those whose duty it is so to do, are not able to instruct them; 'for if the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch.' And in general it is affirmed, that the 'people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;' Hos. iv. 6. Of such ruinous consequence, by one means or other, is the people's ignorance of what it is their duty to know. And by no one way doth it so effec-

tually operate unto their destruction, as by this of disposing them to a defection from the truth which they have professed, when any trial or temptation doth befall them.

Multitudes, yea whole nations, are often brought unto an outward general profession of the truth of religion, especially with respect unto the opposition of any other that is made thereunto. The influence and example of some that are in power and esteem among them, falling in with a season of encouraging circumstances, may produce this effect, where men have little knowledge of what they profess, and less sense of its power and efficacy. So the body of the people of old turned unto the profession of the true religion under the reformation made by Josiah; 'nevertheless,' (as the prophet observes,) 'they did it not with their whole hearts, but feignedly;' Jer. iii. 10. They did it not out of love to the truth, or a cordial respect unto the ways of God, but in a hypocritical compliance with their ruler. The conversion of the northern nations after they had possessed the western parts of the Roman empire, was a pledge of what their future profession was like to prove. The first conversion of the world was, by the laborious preaching of apostles, evangelists, and others, accompanied with many miraculous operations, exemplified in holiness of life, and patience under all sorts of persecutions. And by this means none were received or admitted into the profession of Christian religion, but such as were personally convinced of its truth, instructed in its mysteries, conformed in their lives to its precepts, and engaged unto its profession against persecution. But in these latter conversions, some kings, rulers, or potentates being dealt withal by popes or other princes, and thereon (perhaps with no small influence from secular considerations) admitting of the Christian religion in opposition unto paganism, their allies, kindred, and subjects usually followed them therein, having indeed little more of Christianity than the administration of some external rites, and a relinquishment of their old idols for the new saints proposed unto them. By this means their first profession of Christianity was laid in profound ignorance of the principles and most important doctrines and duties of the gospel. Hence it became most easy for them who were looked on as their guides, to lead them into all those foolish opi-

nions, idolatrous practices, superstitious devotions, and blind subjection to themselves, whence at length issued the fatal apostacy. Knowing but little of what they ought to have known, and delighting not in obedience unto what they did know, they willingly embraced themselves, and God judicially gave them up unto those strong delusions which turned them wholly from the gospel.

Thus the generality of this nation hath received and professed the Protestant religion in opposition unto popery. And no doubt many did so through a sincere and effectual conviction of its truth upon the first reformation. But it is so come to pass, that what through their own supine negligence and carelessness about all things invisible and eternal, what through the sloth, ignorance, laziness, and wretched indifferency in religion of some of those that should instruct them, multitudes are become shamefully ignorant of the rudiments and principles of that religion which they account themselves to profess. So hath it been almost in all ages and places, after profession became national. Many will not make use of the means of instruction which they have, and more want that means in an effectual measure. Nor, it may be, can there be an instance given where there hath been sufficient care taken, or at least sufficient provision made for the instruction of the body of the people in all parts of it. Neither is that ordinary course of the ministry which is passant in the world, sufficient to this purpose. Can any man who knows any thing of the gospel, or of the nature of men with respect unto spiritual things, once suppose, that the reading of prayers unto a people, or the rehearsing of a sermon without zeal, life, power, or evidence of compassion for the souls of men, accompanied with a light, vain, worldly conversation (as it is with many), should answer the apostolical pattern of laying the foundation, and then carrying on of men by continual instruction unto perfection? From hence (as also from other reasons obvious unto all impartial observers) it is, that 'darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people;' ignorance prevailing on all sorts of men. Some will not learn, some have none to teach them, some are engaged in the pursuit of sensual lusts and vanities, some swallowed up in the love of and cares about the things of the world, few in any age have been conscientiously dili-

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ruths of the gospel abandoned for monkish dreams, for legends of foolish lying miracles, and other heathenish superstitions. It was by ignorance, I say, principally, that the people gave themselves up unto the power of seducers, which enabled the architects of the Roman apostacy to carry them into opinions, ways, and practices suited unto their secular interest. And so sensible have they been of their advantage hereby, as that some of them have commended ignorance as the most useful qualification of the people in religion.

We may therefore well fix this as another cause or occasion at least of apostacy: when men are ignorant of the religion which themselves profess, as to its doctrines, and the principal grounds of them; where they are like the Samaritans, who understood not their own religious worship which they had received by tradition, 'but worshipped they knew not what,' John iv. 22. they are no way able to defend themselves against the least impressions of seducers. They may plod on in the old track of some formal outward duties, but if any one meets them in their way, it is easy for him to turn them out of it. So the apostle, shewing the danger that professors were in because of apostatical seducers, he assigns the means of their preservation to be 'the unction which they had received, whereby they knew all things;' 1 John ii. 19, 20. 27. Had they not been taught and instructed in the truth, they could not at such a season have persevered in the profession of the faith. Yea, such persons are very ready to think that there is something worthy their consideration in what is proposed unto them by the most corrupt seducers; whereas they have really found nothing in what themselves

have so long professed. For no man can find any real benefit, profit, or advantage in that whereof he is ignorant. So it is said, that some by 'good words and fair speeches do deceive the hearts of the simple;' Rom. xvi. 18. Every thing they say hath a plausible pretence and appearance unto persons under that character, so as that they are apt to be taken and pleased with it. Hence is that advice of the apostle unto them who design establishment in faith and order: 'Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men;' 1 Cor. xiv. 20. τέλειοι γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσί; 'be ye complete, perfect,' well instructed in your minds, fully initiated into the doctrines of the gospel. Such the apostle calls τελείους, 'perfect men,' 1 Cor. ii. 7. Heb. v. 14. Those who in opposition hereunto are children, that is, weak and ignorant, will also be uncertain and unstable. They will be as children 'tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;' Eph. iv. 14.

For let some crafty papal emissaries come among this sort of people, and let them confidently tell them, that they neither have nor ever will have any benefit by the religion they profess; and that they have no evidence or assurance of the truth of it; they tell them no more but what they will know to be true, if once they take it into consideration. For whereas they have seemed to be always learning, by resorting to church, and the like outward means whereby religion is expressed, yet they never 'came to the knowledge of the truth.' Wherefore, when by any means they are put unto a stand, and are forced to consider themselves, they are amazed to find how little it is that they believe of the religion which they profess, or know of the ground of what they would be thought to believe.

Let such persons add (as they will not fail to do), that with them of Rome is full assurance, that none ever mistook the way who accompanied them that are of the old religion which their forefathers professed so many ages before this new-fangledness came up, which hath filled all things with confusion, disorder, sects, and divisions; whereas before, all were of one mind (which was the most plausible argument of paganism against Christianity), every troublesome

personal circumstance of their present condition, makes them inclinable to believe, that it may be as they say. Let them tell them moreover of the power granted unto the priesthood of their church to pardon all sorts of sins; of the effectual intercession of saints and angels, among whom they may choose out particular patrons and guardians for themselves; of the mercy, grace, goodness, power, and interest, in heaven of the blessed Virgin, all continually exercised in the behalf of Catholics; of the miracles that are daily wrought among them; of the wondrous sanctity and devotion which some among them have attained; they begin to think that there is somewhat in these things which they can feel or see, whereas in their own religion they can understand little or nothing at all. The great things of the gospel are strange things unto them; they neither do nor can understand them by all the diligence they think meet to use in this case. But the things now proposed unto them have the nature of tales, which the mind of man is accustomed unto, and apt both to receive and retain. And it is not imaginable how easy a transition will prove, from a religion whereof men know little or nothing at all, unto that which at one view presents unto their fancies and senses, all that they need believe or do, that they may be eternally happy.

Suppose one of another sort come among such persons, and at once call them off from the profession of that religion which they pretend unto, confidently requiring them to attend wholly unto a light within them, which will be their guide and direct them unto God. They find by natural experience that there is some such light within them, as that which he seems to propose unto them; for there is so in all men, as the apostle declares, even the 'light of conscience accusing or excusing as unto sin or duty;' Rom. ii. 14, 15. Having therefore, by reason of their ignorance, no experience of any power or efficacy in that religion which themselves profess, they begin to think there is a reality in what is proposed unto them, and so are easily inveigled. For there is no security of his constancy for one moment when a trial or temptation shall befall him, who hath not light or knowledge enough of the truth to give him some inward experience of the efficacy of what he doth profess.

But it is no way necessary to insist any longer on that

which is so evident, both in matter of fact, and in the reasons of it. An apostacy from a traditional profession, of those truths which indeed men understand not, is easy, and in a time of temptation unavoidable. In all ages multitudes have thus perished for want of knowledge. For such persons are destitute of defence against any external cause or means of defection. They have nothing in their minds to oppose to force, nothing unto seductions or fraud, nothing to the examples of great leaders, nothing to conflict with the superstition of their own minds, and will therefore, when wind and tide suits the design, comply with any fair pretence for a revolt.

And herein lieth no small part of the danger of the public profession of the Protestant religion among us. By whose defect principally God knows, but it is incredible how stupidly ignorant multitudes are. Such there are who know no difference in religion, whilst the same names of God and Christ are commonly used, and the same places frequented for worship. Yet will this sort of men shew great zeal and earnestness against popery and other heresies. None more forward to revile, contemn, and prosecute them to their power, as ready as Mahometans are to persecute Christians, or Papists sincere believers, and that on the same grounds. But if at any time they are put unto a stand, and necessitated to give an account unto themselves of the reason of their own religion, what it is they believe, and why they do so, their confidence will fail them, and like unto men fallen into cross-paths and ways, they will not know what to do. And on such occasions they are the readiest of all men in a kind of shame of themselves, to give up the religion which they have professed, for any other wherein it is promised they shall have more skill, and by which they may have some benefit, as it is pretended, whereas by their own they have had none at all.

Whatever therefore is amongst us or elsewhere an occasion of ignorance among the people, it doth expose them unto a fatal defection from the truth. If those upon whom it is incumbent to instruct them in the knowledge of the truths and mysteries of the gospel, are unskilful or negligent in the discharge of their duty, they do what lieth in them to give them as bound hand and foot to the power of their spi-

ritual adversaries. And they will be found chargeable with no less guilt, who lay obstructions in the way of others who would willingly labour in the instruction of them unto their power. A man would think from all circumstances, and all indications of the present inclinations of the minds of men, that it were the chief interest of all that really love the Protestant religion, to preserve its professors from apostacy, or any disposition thereunto. That this will be done effectually without a continual instruction of them in the truths which are to be professed, with their grounds, reasons, and effects, is so fond an imagination, as that it deserves no consideration; it is but to build castles in the air, to suppose that men will be kept constant in the profession of religion, by outward laws, the observance of external forms, and the secular advantages of some persons by it, wherein they are not concerned. They will not be so, I say, when a trial shall befall them. There is no other means that is appointed of God, or is rational in itself, for the attaining of this end, but that those who are so concerned, do what in them lies personally to instruct the people in the truth, encouraging of them unto obedience by their own example, and to prevail with them who have the same design to be assisting with them therein. But to cry out of the great danger of Protestant religion in the growth of popery, and at the same time not only to be negligent themselves in the great duty of communicating the real effectual knowledge of it unto the souls of men, but also to lay needless obstructions in the ways of others, who would sincerely endeavour so to do, is an unaccountable solecism in religion. Either we are not in earnest in our pretended zeal for the truth, and our fears of the prevalency of popery, or we believe not that instruction in the truth is the only means to preserve men in the useful profession of it, which is to renounce the gospel, and all rational consideration therewithal; or we are influenced by other things, which we far more esteem than evangelical truth, and the purity of religion.

The reformation of the church consisted principally in the deliverance of the people from darkness and ignorance. And if through our neglect they should be reduced again into the same state and condition, they would be a ready prey for the papacy to seize upon. The advice of the apo-

stle as to the duty of all gospel ministers and officers, in such a season as we are fallen into, is that alone which will preserve us; 2 Tim. iv. 1—4.

But it may be supposed, that so much labour and diligence in the instruction and teaching of the people, as some assert, is altogether unnecessary. It is enough if they be taught what are the general principles of religion, and do thereon comply with the conduct of the church whereunto they do belong. Besides, if this burden be incumbent on the ministry, that those called thereunto are to have no relaxation from constant sedulous 'labouring in the word and doctrine,' and are moreover required to exemplify what they teach, in the whole course of their conversation, who would ever take upon him that office, that can advantage himself in the world any other way? It must needs prove very burdensome, if we have a religion that will not be preserved in the minds of men, without all this constant endless toil and labour. In the Roman church, we see how easy a thing it is to keep up the people unto its profession, whilst the clergy are at liberty to pursue and use the pleasures and honours of this world; nor are any of them obliged unto those irksome and endless pains, which we seem to require. Yea, they find by experience that ignorance in the people is the best expedient to keep them in subjection to the priests, and then all things are secure. I wish that such thoughts as these do not influence the minds of some unto a readiness for a change, if so be it might be effected without hazard. But if more pains, diligence, labour, with perseverance therein, be required by us in the ministers of the gospel, and guides of the church, than the Holy Ghost in the Scripture doth plainly, positively, frequently enjoin, let it be rejected and despised. Alas! the best of us, of all that are alive, do come short in many things of the rules and examples, that are proposed unto us therein. Nor do I know on what grounds, or by what measures, the most of us do intend to give up our accounts at the last day. Nor is there any more impious opinion, nor more contradictory to the gospel, than that it is enough for the people to be instructed only in the general principles of religion, without any farther improvement or growth in knowledge. For those who are thus called the people, are, I suppose, esteemed Christians, that

is, disciples of Jesus Christ, and members of his mystical body; and if they are so, their growth in understanding, their edification in knowledge, their being carried on unto perfection, their acquaintance with the whole counsel of God, with the mysteries of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, are as necessary for them as the 'saving of their souls' indispensably depending thereon, can render them. And if we will be ministers of the gospel, it will not be best for us to prescribe unto ourselves, our rules and measures of duty. It will be our wisdom to accept of that office on the terms limited by the Holy Ghost, or utterly to let it alone. And we must know, that the more exactly our profession is suited unto the gospel, the less mixture there is in it of any thing human, the more difficult it is thoroughly to instruct men in the knowledge of it. The mind of man is far more apt and able to comprehend and retain fables, errors, and superstitions, than evangelical truths. The former are natural unto it; against the latter it hath a dislike and enmity, until they are removed by grace. Hence, some will make a more appearing proficiency in a false religion in four or five days, than others will do in the knowledge of the truth almost in so many years. We may have well-grown Papists in a month's time, that shall be expert in the mysteries of their devotion; and there is another profession, that two or three days will bring men unto a perfection in. But slow is the progress of most, in learning the truth and mysteries of the gospel. If peculiar diligence and constant sedulity be not used in their instruction, they will be made a prey unto the next opportunity for a defection from the truth.

CHAP. VI.

Pride and vanity of mind, sloth and negligence, love of the world, causes of apostacy; the work of Satan, and judgments of God in this matter.

THE innate pride and vanity of the minds of men, is another means whereby they are disposed and inclined unto an apostacy from the profession of evangelical truth. With respect hereunto, the design and work of the gospel is to 'cast down

imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God' (taught therein), 'bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ;' 2 Cor. x. 3. The mind of man is naturally lifted up with high thoughts in itself and of itself. That it is sufficient unto all the ends of its being, all the duties of its condition, without any special aid or assistance from above, is the prevailing principle whereby it is acted. Men do not only by nature say, 'With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?' Psal. xii. 4. we have a sovereignty over all our outward actions; but also, that nothing is, or can, or ought to be required of us, but what we have power in ourselves to comprehend, comply withal, and perform: this in all ages of the church, under various forms and pretences, hath been contended for. The true state of all controversies about the powers of nature and grace, is this, That on the one hand, the minds and wills of men, are asserted to be self-sufficient as to internal abilities, unto all duties of obedience necessary unto eternal blessedness; on the other, that we have 'no sufficiency of ourselves, but that all our sufficiency is of God.' See 2 Cor. iii. 5. ix. 8. This principle which sprung immediately out of that pride, whereby aiming at an enlargement of our self-sufficiency, we utterly lost what we had, was never yet rooted out of the minds of the generality of professed Christians.

In all things the mind of man would be its own measure, guide, and rule, continually teeming with these two evils:

1. It exalts imaginations of its own, which it loves, applauds, dotes on, and adheres unto. This is the original of heresy, this hath given birth, growth, and progress to error. For 'God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions;' Eccles. vii. 29. Seeking out and exalting inventions of our own in things spiritual and religious, is the principal and most pernicious consequent of our fall from that state of uprightness wherein of God we were created.

2. It makes itself the sole and absolute judge of what is divinely proposed unto it, whether it be true or false, good or evil, to be received or rejected, without desire or expectation of any supernatural guidance or assistance. And whatever is unsuited unto its own prejudicate imaginations,

it is ready to scorn and despise. That, therefore, which we are now to demonstrate, is, that where this pride and principle are predominant, where the one is not mortified by grace, nor the other eradicated by spiritual light, there men can never receive the truths of the gospel in a due manner, and are ready to renounce them when they have by any means been brought unto the profession of them for a season. For,

The gospel, that is, the doctrines of it, and truths contained in it, is proposed unto us, in the name, and on the authority of God, having his image and superscription upon it. It hath such impressions of divine wisdom, goodness, grace, holiness, and power upon it, as manifests it to be the 'glorious gospel of the blessed God;' 1 Tim. i. 11. Hence it ought to be received with a holy reverence, with a due sense of the glory of God, and, as his 'voice speaking unto us from heaven.' Hence is the caution of the apostle, that we would not refuse or turn from 'him who speaketh from heaven;' Heb. xii. 25. Without this it will never be duly received, truly understood, nor steadfastly believed. It is not to be received as 'the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God;' 1 Thess. ii. 13. It must be received with that frame of spirit, with that submission, that subjection of soul and conscience, which becomes poor worms of the earth when they have to do with the great and holy God, expressed Gen. xviii. 27. So our Saviour tells us, that, 'unless we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Unless we deny ourselves and all our own imaginations, unless we become humble and teachable, we can never arrive at a useful acquaintance with the mysteries of it. And he convinced the learned Pharisees, that by reason of their pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy, they could not perceive or understand the doctrine which he taught.

God promiseth that he will teach the meek or humble in judgment; 'the meek will he teach his way;' Psal. xxv. 9. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant;' ver. 14. 'Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts;' Isa. xxviii. 9. Unless men become as weaned

children, as David affirms of himself, Psal. cxxxi. 2. when 'his heart was not haughty nor his eyes lifted up,' ver. 1. God will not teach them. There is, therefore, no such effectual obstruction of divine teachings as the pride of men's minds, which is utterly inconsistent with them. Hence it is that men come with carnal confidence in themselves, the ability and sagacity of their own minds, to the consideration of the gospel and the things contained in it, without the least peculiar awe or reverence of God from whom it is. And hence do they suppose themselves, without more ado, competent judges of the mind of the Holy Ghost in all divine revelations. Can men, who have once read the Scripture, imagine that this is the way to learn heavenly truth, or to partake of the teachings of God? Will the same frame of spirit suffice them in this design, as that which they have when they are exercised about their other occasions? When we consider how men, for the most part, learn the truth, we need not wonder to see how easily they unlearn and forsake it. If the truth, at any time, be entertained by a soul whose mind is unhumbled, and whose affections are unmortified, it is a troublesome inmate, and will, on the first occasion, be parted withal. It is true, we ought to employ the utmost of our rational abilities in the investigation of sacred truth; but yet, if therein we follow the conduct of our own minds, diving perhaps into subtleties and niceties, forsaking a humble dependance on the teachings of God, it may be under apprehensions of singular wisdom, we betray ourselves into ruinous folly. This was that which corrupted all the endeavours of the schoolmen, and left them in the height of their inquiries to wax vain in their imaginations. The way of handling spiritual things in a spiritual manner, in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth; that is, not with curious subtle reasonings and inventions of carnal unsanctified minds, but with that evidence and plainness in argumentation, suited practically to affect the minds and consciences of men, which the Scripture giveth us both example and rule for, was despised by them; but they came to the study of sacred things with their minds stuffed and prepossessed with philosophical notions and conceptions, with sophisms, distinctions, and various expressions of the serpentine wits of men, which they mixed with divinity, or the doctrine of the Scrip-

ture, wofully corrupting, debasing, and perverting it thereby. Most of their disputes were such as had never had foundation nor occasion in the world, if Aristotle had not invented some odd terms and distinctions remote from the common understanding and reason of men wiser than himself. To inquire into divine revelation with a holy, humble frame of heart, waiting and praying for divine teaching and illumination of mind, that themselves might be made wise in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and able to instruct others in the knowledge and fear of God, it never came into their minds. But being furnished and puffed up with a conceit of their own sagacity, philosophical ability, and disputing faculty, harnessed with syllogisms, distinctions, solutions, and most preposterous methods of craft, they came with boldness on Christian religion, and forming it to their own imaginations, dressing it up and exposing of it in foolish terms of art, under a semblance of wondrous subtlety, they wholly corrupted it, and drew off the minds of men from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Not one article of religion did this proud, self-conceited generation of men leave, that (whether their conclusions were true or false about it) any man could come to the understanding of it, who had not been a better proficient in the school of Aristotle than of Christ. To believe and teach the doctrine of the Scripture, though with sound reason and judgment, and, in the way of the Scripture, to affect the minds and consciences of men, without their philosophical notions, niceties, distinctions, whereby they had carved a corrupt, depraved, monstrous image of all things, and the knowledge of them, was, among them, to be a heretic, or a blockhead. By the pride, confidence, and pretended subtlety of these men, was religion totally corrupted, and the fountains poisoned from whence others sought for the waters of the sanctuary. Even what was left of truth among them was so debased, so divested of its native heavenly glory, beauty, and majesty, was rendered so deformed and unsuited unto that spiritual light wherein alone it can be usefully discerned, as to render it altogether useless and inefficacious unto its proper ends. Nor are we ever in more danger to subduct ourselves from under the teachings of God, than when we lean unto our own understandings in our inquiries into spi-

ritual things, so as to forget that humble lowly frame of heart wherein alone we are meet to be taught, or to learn in a due manner. And this is one way whereby men, through the innate pride of their minds, are obstructed in the receiving, and disposed unto the relinquishment of evangelical truths.

Again; it is confessed that there is nothing proposed unto us in the gospel that is contrary unto reason, as reason is the due comprehension and measure of things as they are in their own nature. For how should there be so, seeing it is in itself the principal external effect of the reason or wisdom of God, which hath given unto all things their natures, properties, and measures? But yet there are things revealed in it which are above the comprehension of reason, as planted in the finite limited understanding of man. Nor is the ground hereof the accidental corruption of our nature, but the essential constitution of its being. There are, I say, divine mysteries in the gospel whose revelation we may understand, but the nature of the things themselves we cannot comprehend. And this reason itself cannot but acknowledge; for whereas it knows itself to be finite, limited, and bounded, how should it be able perfectly to comprehend things infinite, or all the effects of infinite wisdom? 'Can we by searching find out God? can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what can we do? deeper than hell; what can we know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea;' Job xi. 7—9. These things so exceed the natural and duly proportionate objects of our understandings, as that we cannot find them out to perfection. The reason of man hath nothing here to do, but humbly to comply with the revelations that are made of them.

Moreover, there are in the gospel things that are unsuited, yea, contradictory unto reason as it is corrupted. Reason in us is now no longer to be considered merely as it is finite and limited, but as in the subject and exercise of it, it is impaired, depraved, and corrupted. To deny this, is to deny the fundamental principle and supposition that in all things the gospel proceedeth on; that is, that Jesus Christ came into the world to restore and repair our natures. In this state, as it is unable of itself to discern and judge of

spiritual things in a due manner, so it is apt to frame unto itself vain imaginations, and to be prepossessed with innumerable prejudices, contrary unto what the gospel doth teach and require. And whatever it doth so fancy or frame, the mind esteems as proper acts and effects of reason as any it exerciseth or is capable of.

With respect unto both these, namely, the weakness of reason as it is finite and limited, and the depravation of reason as it is corrupted, it is the design of the gospel to bring every thought into captivity unto the obedience of faith. For,

1. As to the former, it requires men to believe things above their reason, merely on the authority of divine revelation. Things they must believe, which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man to conceive,' only they are 'revealed unto us by the Spirit;' 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. It will not admit of an inquiry how those things may be which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. The sense and meaning of the revelation it may inquire into, but cannot comprehend the things revealed. 'Nobis curiositate opus non est post Jesum Christum, nec inquisitione post evangelium; cum credimus nihil desideramus ultra credere, hoc enim prius credimus, non esse quod ultra credere debemus;' Tertull. Præscrip. adv. Hæres. And when of old, the wise, the scribes, the disputers of this world, would not submit hereunto, under the supposed conduct of their reason, they fell into the most brutish unreasonableness, in judging the wisdom of God to be folly, and his power to be weakness;' 1 Cor. i. 18—22. 25. And it is an unparalleled attempt of atheism which some in our days (who would yet be accounted Christians) have engaged in: they would exalt philosophy, or human reason, into a right of judicature over all divine revelations. Nothing must be supposed to be contained in them, but what is measurable by its principles and rules. What pretends to be above them they say it ought to be rejected, which is to make itself infinite, or the wisdom and understanding of God finite and limited. Wherefore, as to the things that are revealed in the gospel, because many of them are absolutely above the comprehensions of our minds or reasons, they are not the judge of them, but are the servants of faith only in bearing witness

unto them. 'For the things of a man knoweth the spirit of a man that is in him, but the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God;' 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12. In brief, to affirm that we can be obliged to believe no more than we can comprehend, or nothing but what we can perfectly understand the nature of in itself, or that we may reject what is really above reason, on a supposition that it is contrary unto reason, is to renounce the gospel, and therewith all divine revelations. And this is spoken not of reason as it is corrupted, but merely as it is human reason, finite and limited.

2. As in things infinite, spiritual, and heavenly, the gospel proposeth unto men things quite above their comprehension, supposing their reason to be pure and incorrupted, only allowing it to be that which is finite and limited; so in things which practically respect the obedience of faith which it doth require, it prescribeth things contrary unto our natural conceptions, or reason as it is in us depraved. For the natural conceptions of our minds about religious duties and the way of living unto God, are all of them suited unto the covenant of works: for they are the effects of the remainders of that light which did direct us to walk with God thereby. But hereunto the disposal of things in the covenant of grace is diametrically opposed, so that their accounts will never intermix; Rom. xi. 6. Yea, the carnal mind, that is, reason as it is corrupted, acts its contradiction unto the will of God as revealed in the gospel with enmity and and hatred; Rom. viii. 7. And for those duties which are suited unto the light of nature, the gospel doth so change them with the respect it gives them unto the mediation of Christ and the efficiency of the Holy Spirit, as that corrupted reason defies them being so qualified, as foreign unto its conceptions. The duties themselves it can approve of, but not of their respect unto Jesus Christ, whereunto they are disposed by the gospel.

Hence it is that of old those who pretended such an absolute sovereignty in their own reason, as to admit of nothing as truth but what its dictates complied withal, were of all men the slowest to receive, and the forwardest to oppose the mysteries of the gospel; because they were above it in some things, and contrary unto it in more, as it is in most things corrupted, they looked on them as folly, and so

despised them. This the apostle declares and records, 1 Cor. i. ii. Especially was it so among them who unto the vain imaginations wherein in general their 'foolish heart was darkened,' had superadded some peculiar sect in philosophy which was of reputation among the wise men of the world. For they conceived and maintained all the maxims of their sect as the absolute dictates of right reason, though most of them were foolish fancies, either taken up by tradition, or sophistically imposed on their understandings. Hence every thing that was contrary unto such principles, or inconsistent with them, they looked on as opposite unto reason, and so despised it. Nor is it much otherwise at this day with many Christians, who make the traditional principles of their sect or party the rule whereby every thing that is in religion proposed unto them may be examined. Thus though the generality of philosophers and wise men at Athens rejected the doctrine of the apostle, yet were there none so forward and fierce in their opposition unto him, so contemptuously proud in their censures of him, as were the Epicureans and Stoics; Acts xvii. 18. And the reason hereof was because the doctrine which he taught was eminently contrary to the maxims of their peculiar sects. For whereas the Epicureans denied the providence of God in the government of the world, the existence of the souls of men after this life, all eternal rewards or punishments, there was no admission of any one word of the apostle's doctrine without a renunciation of all their impious sentiments, and so the ruin of their sect. And as for the Stoics, the fundamental principle of their philosophy was, that a man should look for all blessedness or happiness in and from himself alone, and from the things that were in his own power, as being every way sufficient unto himself for that end. All that the apostle taught concerning the mediation of Christ, and the grace of God by him, was also diametrically opposite unto this principle. Wherefore, those of these two sects opposed him in a peculiar manner; not only from the pride and darkness that is naturally in the minds of men, and improved by the advancement of corrupted reason above its own proper place and dignity; but from the prejudicate opinions which on the reputation of their sects they adhered unto, as assured dictates of right reason in general. And when some such per-

sons as these afterward, upon a general conviction of its truth, took upon them a profession of the gospel, they were the men who corrupted its principal mysteries by their vain philosophy, as the apostle intimates, Col. ii. 8. So Tertullian; 'Hæreses a philosophia subornantur. Inde Æones et formæ, et nescio quæ, et Trinitas hominum apud Valentinum, Platonicus fuerat. Inde Marcionis Deus melior de tranquillitate, a Stoicis venerat; et ubi anima interire dicatur ab Epicuræis observatur; et ut carnis restitutio negatur, de una omnium philosophorum schola sumitur.'

We may apply these things unto our present purpose. The design of the gospel, in all its especial truths and mysteries, is to bring 'every thought in subjection unto the obedience of faith.' Hence is that direction which flesh and blood will never comply withal, 'If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise;' 1 Cor. iii. 18. Unless men renounce their carnal wisdom in all its principles, effects, and operations, they will never become wise with that wisdom which is from above. And he who knoweth not what it is so to become a fool, be he who he will, was never yet wise towards God. Wherefore, when men have taken on them the outward profession of the gospel, they begin to find upon inquiry that the mysteries and principles of its doctrine are unsuited with the natural pride of their minds, and inconsistent with that absolute sovereignty which they would in all things give unto their own reason. Hereon 'many inventions are sought out' to cast off the yoke of faith, and to re-enthrone reason in the room thereof. Not that men depart from the faith with this express design, but this is that which secretly influenceth them thereunto. Hence the generality of those who forsake the truth on this ground and occasion, are such as trusting too soon to their own rational abilities, having neither will, nor humility, nor industry to inquire into the principles and reasons of truth in a due manner, do give up themselves unto the conduct and teaching of others, who have invented opinions more suited unto the innate pride of their minds and carnal reasonings. And some, by an over earnest pursuit of the workings of their own rational faculties in spiritual things, having subducted their minds from that humble frame wherein alone they are capa-

ble of divine teaching, are betrayed into the same miscarriage. All ancient heresies sprung from this root; yea, those of them which are most absurd and foolish, and most diametrically opposite unto right reason, arose from a pretence thereof. For when men will have reason to have an absolute supremacy in religion, it is unavoidable but they must judge that their own is the reason which is intended; and that some may be led hereby into very foolish imaginations, is easy to be conjectured, unless we shall suppose all men to be equally wise and sober.

I shall briefly exemplify these things in one instance, and that in a prevalent apostacy from the truth, and which at present is visibly progressive in the world. This is that of Socinianism. And I shall give an instance herein, because the poison of it is highly efficacious where it meets with the complexion and constitution of mind before described, and is more diffused than many are aware of. For although the name of it be generally condemned, and there are some opinions comprised under it whose profession is inconsistent with the interest of the most, yet all those deviations from the truth which we have amongst us under several denominations, are emanations from that corrupt fountain. Yea, the whole of it being a system of opinions craftily suited unto the first notions and conceptions of corrupted reason, and the inbred pride of men's minds in them, who on any account own divine revelation, the first proposal of them finds ready entertainment with many of those whose souls are not prepared and fortified against them by a spiritual experience of the excellency, power, and efficacy of the mysteries of the gospel. They no sooner hear of them but they know they express what they would have, as gratifying all the corrupt desires and carnal reasonings of their minds.

There are, as was observed before, two sorts of things in the doctrines of the gospel. 1. Such as are above the comprehension and measure of reason in its best condition, as it is in us limited and confined. 2. Such as are contrary unto it as corrupted and depraved. And unto these two heads is this kind of apostacy reducible.

1. What is above reason, incomprehensible by it, those of this way do absolutely reject. Such are the doctrines of the Trinity, and of the incarnation of the Son of God. Be-

cause the things taught in these doctrines are not comprehensible by their reason, they conclude that they are repugnant unto right reason. And by others the same doctrines are refused, as not compliant with the light that is within them. For the existence of the divine nature in three distinct persons, with the hypostatical union of the natures of God and man in the same person, they cannot acknowledge. These things, so fully, so plainly, so frequently revealed and asserted in the Scripture, so attested by the primitive Catholic church, are rejected on no other reason, but that they are against reason; nor is there any pretence that they are so, but because they are above it. When they have puzzled themselves with Nicodemus's question, 'How can these things be?' they peremptorily deny their existence, because they cannot comprehend the manner of it.

2. As unto those things which are contrary unto reason as corrupted, these they deprave and wrest unto a compliance therewithal. So they deal with the doctrine of the attributes of God, of his eternal decrees, of the office and mediation of Christ, of justification by his righteousness, of the power and efficacy of the grace of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and of the resurrection of the dead. Because they cannot bring their reason as corrupted and depraved unto a compliance with these truths, they will force, hale, torture, and rack the truths themselves to bring them into slavery unto their own reasons, or carnal fleshly conceptions of spiritual things. For allowing the words, terms, and propositions, wherein they are expressed, they put absurd senses upon them, destructive unto the faith, and contrary to the whole scope and design of the Scripture; so do they endeavour expressly to bring every divine revelation into captivity unto the bondage of their own perverse reasonings and imaginations.

It is therefore evident that this kind of apostacy springs from no other root but the pride of the minds of men, refusing to admit of evangelical truths on the mere authority of divine revelation, where they are above reason as it is limited, or contrary unto it as corrupted. On these terms the gospel can nowhere keep its station, nor will it forego its prerogative by subjecting itself to be tried by these uncertain measures, or weighed in these uneven tottering ba-

lances. The humble, the meek, the teachable, those who are made free and willing to captivate their understandings unto the obedience of faith, are those alone with whom it will abide and continue.

But it may be said, that this being only one private heresy, of no great extent or acceptation in the world, there is no danger of any influence from it into a more general defection. So it may be, it seems unto many, but I must acknowledge myself to be otherwise minded; and that for two reasons.

1. Because of the advance which it maketh every day in the addition of new, bold, proud imaginations unto what it hath already made its successful attempts in. For in the pursuit of the same principles with those of the men of this way and persuasion, not a few begin absolutely to submit the Scripture and every thing contained in it to the judgment and sentence of their own reason, which is the true form and spirit of Socinianism visibly acting itself with some more than ordinary confidence. What is suited unto their reason they will receive, and what is not so, let it be affirmed a hundred times in the Scripture, they will reject with the same ease and confidence as if they were imaginations of men like themselves. Both books that are written unto this purpose, and the common discourses of many, do fully testify unto this advance of the pride of the minds of men. And he is careless about these things who seeth not that the next stage is downright atheism: This is that dunghill which such blazing exhalations of pride do at last fall into. And herein do many countenance themselves with a false and foolish pretence, that all those whom they differ from are fanatical enemies of reason, when they ascribe unto it all that any man in his wits can so do, who believeth divine revelations, and doth not absolutely disavow the corruption of nature by the fall.

2. The poison of these principles is greatly diffused in the world. For hence it is that all those doctrines of the gospel which have any thing of spiritual mystery in them, which are constituent principles of, or do any way belong unto, the covenant of grace, and so not absolutely reconcileable unto reason as corrupt and carnal, are by many so laden with contempt and scorn, that it is sufficient to ex-

pose any man unto the contumelies of ignorant, irrational, and foolish, who dares to avow them. Such are the doctrines of eternal predestination, of the total corruption of the nature of man as unto spiritual things by the fall, of the power and efficacy of the grace of God in the conversion of sinners, of the nature and necessity of regeneration, of union with Christ, of justification by the imputation of his righteousness, of the nature of internal inherent righteousness or evangelical holiness, of the necessity of continual supplies of the Spirit in actual grace unto all duties of obedience, of the power of the Holy Ghost evidencing the divine authority of the Scriptures in and by themselves, with sundry others. Many can see no reason for the admittance of these things, or they cannot see the reason of them; and therefore, although they are fully and plainly declared in the Scriptures, yet are they (by no small generation among us) so derided and exploded, as that the very names of them are grown into contempt. But why all this scorn, all this severity? Men may do well to consider, that not long since all the prelates of England owned those doctrines as articles of faith which now they so deride. And although they are not obliged, by any divine precept, to be of the same judgment with them because it was theirs, yet it may be they are under some obligation from the laws of the land not to renounce the ancient doctrines of the church, and are certainly bound by the laws of Christian modesty and sobriety, not to vilify and scorn the doctrines they owned, and all that do profess them.

But it is warrant sufficient unto some for the utmost detestation of any principles in religion, that they have a seeming incompliance with their reason, though apparently corrupted by prejudice and weakened by ignorance. Hence they will not admit that there can be a consistency between the unchangeableness of God's decrees, and the freedom of our wills; that justification by the blood of Christ doth not render our own obedience needless; that the efficacy of God's grace and the necessity of our duty are reconcilable. And herein they seem to take along with them as their security these two principles, seeing without them they have no foundation to build upon:

(1.) That reason, as it acts in them, is the same with

right reason in general, that whatever respect is due to the one, is so to the other. It were well in the mean time, if prejudices, corrupt affections, and gross ignorance, did not on great variety of occasions manifest themselves among this sort of persons; and not only so, but such a course of conversation among some of them as none can think consistent with the divine teachings who believe the Scriptures. But it is so come to pass, that all that humility, meekness, self-diffidence, all that conscientious fear of sinning and practice of holiness, which the word of God makes so necessary unto them who would learn the truth as it is in Jesus, are by many (puffed up with a conceit of their own ability to know all things) utterly disregarded.

(2.) That there is no time nor instance wherein those thoughts which seem to us most rational, are to be captivated unto the obedience of faith. And yet without this there is no true knowledge of the mind of God in the gospel to be attained. What such principles will carry men out unto in religion were easy to conjecture, if experience did not render conjecture useless in this case.

Wherefore, this pride of the minds of men refusing to bow or subject themselves unto the authority of divine revelation, designing to exalt self in its intellectual and moral abilities, in its powers to know what it should, and do what it ought, hath in all ages been a great principle of opposition unto, and apostacy from, evangelical truth. Nor was it ever more rampant than in the days wherein we live; for besides that it hath openly spawned that whole brood of errors which some entire sects do espouse, it diffuseth itself in its effects among all sorts of professors of Christianity. An humble subjection of mind and conscience unto the authority of God in his word, which alone upon trial will be found to answer the experience of believers, is the only security against this distemper. This we may, this we ought to pray for, not only for ourselves, but that it might be given of God unto them who scarce believe that God gives any thing that is spiritual and supernatural unto the souls of men in any such way, as that the effect should depend on the efficiency of grace, and not on their own wills.

Unto this pride, as inseparable from it, we may adjoin that vanity and curiosity that are in the minds of men.

These are those which the apostle marketh under the outward sign and effect of them, namely, 'itching ears;' 2 Tim. iv. 3. For hence an inclination and hankering of mind after things novel, vain, and curious, doth arise. Under the power of those affections men cannot endure sound doctrine, nor will abide in the simplicity of the gospel. They know not how to be wise unto sobriety, and to keep their speculations about spiritual things within the bounds of sober modesty. But they are still intruding themselves into things they have not seen, being 'vainly puffed up in their own fleshly minds;' Col. ii. 18. And as this curiosity hath produced many of these needless vain opinions, subtle, nice, philosophical disputations and distinctions, wherewith some have filled religion, so from the uncured vanity of mind doth proceed that levity and inconstancy which are in many, whereby they are 'tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine' that blows upon them, from the cunning 'sleights of men who lie in wait to deceive.' Unto all we may add, that carnal pride and ambition (where the outward affairs of the church or the profession of religion are accompanied with such secular advantages of wealth, honour, and rule as to stir up envy and emulation among men of earthly minds), which as they have occasioned many scandalous outrages in religion, so they have been the rise and occasion of many heresies also.

IV. Careless security and groundless confidences do betray men into apostacies from the gospel, when unexpected trials do befall them. To give evidence hereunto we may do well to consider the things that ensue.

1. The Holy Spirit hath sufficiently warned us all, that defections and backslidings from the truth would fall out among the professors of it. This hath been already abundantly manifested in the express instances of such warnings and predictions before produced and insisted on. And there is in the word a vehement application made of all these warnings unto us and our duties. Thence are those exhortations and precepts multiplied, to 'watch, to stand fast in the faith, to be strong and quit ourselves like men' in this matter. Nothing but a diligent attendance unto all gospel duties, and a vigorous acting of all gospel graces, will preserve us, if the Scripture may be believed. And as for those

by whom these things are despised, it is no matter at all what religion they are of.

2. We are foretold and forewarned of the great danger that will attend the professors of the gospel when such a season of apostacy shall by any means come upon them. So prevalent shall the means of it be, as that many shall be deceived, and if it were possible even the elect themselves; Matt. xxiv. 10. 24. Such a season is an 'hour of temptation that cometh on the world to try them that dwell upon the earth;' Rev. iii. 10. And the woful event in them that shall be overtaken with the power of it, in their utter and eternal destruction, is in many instances set before us.

3. It is also plainly intimated, that such a season of the prevalency of a defection from the truth shall be a time of great security among the generality of professed Christians. Churches shall be asleep, persons shall cry Peace, peace, when that day cometh as a snare.

We are not therefore left without sufficient warning in this case, both of the certainty of our trial, the greatness of our concernment, and the danger of security. And yet notwithstanding all these means of excitation unto a vigorous attendance unto our condition, danger, and duty, it is evident unto every discerning eye, how desperately secure are the generality of professors of the gospel with respect unto this evil and the consequents of it. Nothing can awake them unto the consideration of their own state, although their neighbours' houses are set on fire from hell. Love of the world with prosperity and ease on the one hand, or the cares and businesses of it on the other, do so take up the minds of men, that they are not sensible of any concernment in these things. And we may briefly consider the various ways whereby this security puts forth its efficacy in disposing men unto apostacy when they shall fall into the occasions of it.

(1.) It doth so by possessing and overpowering them with a proud, careless, supine negligence. Men hear of this evil and the danger of it, but (like Gallio) they 'care for none of these things.' They know not of any concernment they have in them, nor of any need they have to provide against them. Unto some others perhaps these things may belong, but unto them not at all. Those who would press them on

their minds and consciences, they look on as persons causelessly importunate, or troubled with groundless suspicions and fears. If there be any danger about religion, they doubt not but sooner or later provision will be made against it by law. But as unto any special duty incumbent on themselves with respect unto their own souls, they know nothing of it, nor will consider it. Had not the world been asleep in this security, had not men been utterly regardless of their interest in the truth, it had not been possible that religion should have been so totally corrupted as it was in the papacy, and yet so few take any notice thereof. At some seasons God raised up among them witnesses of the truth, who not only declared and professed it, but also sealed their confession with their blood; but the generality of Christians were so far from being excited thereby to the consideration of their own concerns and duty, as that they opposed and persecuted them unto destruction, as the disturbers of the public tranquillity. And it is no otherwise at this day. Many complain, more fear a defection from the gospel. It is also evident in how many things the doctrine of it is already by some corrupted, by whom it was formerly professed. Instances of as great apostacies as the name of Christianity is capable of, are multiplied among us: and yet how few are there that do at all regard these things, or once consider what is either their duty or their danger in such a season!

(2.) It worketh and is effectual by a wicked indifferency as unto all things in religion. Men under the power of this security neither see nor will understand, nor can be made sensible of the difference that is between truth and error, piety and superstition, so as to value one more than another. It is all religion, and it is no more but so. If persons change from one way to another, so as they do not utterly renounce Jesus Christ, they may be saved in the way they betake themselves unto. The profession of such persons attends on all occasions, and an apostacy from the mysteries of the gospel will be but a useful compliance with opportunity.

We judge no men, no party of men, as to their eternal state and condition, upon the account of their outward profession in religion, unless they are open idolaters or flagitious

in their lives. God only knows how it is between him and their souls. The framing of churches (as the church of Rome) according unto men's minds, fancies, opinions, or interests, and then confining salvation unto them, is an effect of pride and folly, as contradictory to the gospel as any thing that can be imagined. But yet there is a wide difference to be made between apostates and others. Better men had 'never known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn aside from the holy commandment.' Those who have been instructed in the truth of the gospel, and made profession of it, are for the most part acted by such depraved principles, moved by such corrupt lusts, and do shew so much ingratitude against the Lord Jesus Christ in their defection, 'denying the Lord that bought them,' that they put a peculiar character and mark upon themselves. And although we will not judge any, yet is it our duty to put men in remembrance of the danger that attends such apostacies. So the apostle expressly tells the Galatians, that upon their admittance of legal ceremonies, and falling from the grace of the gospel in that one point of justification, that 'Christ should profit them nothing,' or they should have no benefit by what they yet retained of the profession of the gospel; chap. v. 2—5. And as to those who are carried away by the strong delusions of the grand apostacy foretold, 2 Thess. ii. he says plainly, 'that they shall be damned;' ver. 12. As Peter also affirms, that those who introduce 'damnable heresies do bring on themselves, and those that follow their pernicious ways, swift destruction;' 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. So little countenance doth the Scripture give unto this effect of cursed security.

(3.) It likewise worketh by vain confidences. Most men think with Peter, and on no better grounds than he did (nor so good neither, as not being conscious unto themselves of so much sincerity as he was), that though all men should forsake the truth and purity of religion, yet they will not do so. But they understand not at all what it is to be preserved in an hour of temptation, nor what is required thereunto. They scorn to fall away, and yet they scorn all the means whereby they may be preserved from so doing. Tell them that they stand in need of the power of God for their preservation, of the intercession of Christ, of the constant sup-

plies of the Spirit, of an experience of the goodness and efficacy of the truth, with the benefits which their own souls have received thereby; and that for this end they are to watch, pray, and live in a constant attendance unto all evangelical duties; and they despise them all through their pride, or neglect them through their spiritual sloth that they are given up unto. Such persons as these, if they meet with any thing that mates their confidence, fall at once under the power of the next temptation they are assaulted withal. Wherefore, whereas the generality of professed Christians are influenced one way or other by this woful security, it is no wonder if they are surprised and hurried away from their profession by seducers, or that they will be easily carried down the stream when they fall into a general inclination unto a defection.

V. Love of this present world and the perishing satisfactions of it, betrays innumerable souls into frequent apostacies from the gospel. So the apostle assures us in the instance of Demas, 2 Tim. iv. 10. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' And as he forsook the apostle, so also the work of the ministry, and it may be Christianity therewithal. I shall not insist on that love of the world which works by covetousness in the course of men's lives, though this be a means also disposing them unto apostacy. For our Saviour affirms, that the 'seed which falls among thorns is choked;' the word which is received by men whose hearts are filled with the cares of this present world never comes to the perfection of fruit-bearing. I shall only make mention of two seasons wherein the predominancy of this love in the hearts of men, multiplies apostates from the truth.

The first is that of persecution, wherein the professors compared by our Saviour unto the stony ground do presently fall away. 'Such persons,' saith he, 'have no root in themselves, but during for awhile, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, they are offended;' Matt. xiii. 20, 21. The first thing that persecution attacks the minds of men withal is their secular interests in this world; their wealth, their houses, lands, and possessions are put into hazard by it. Willing it may be this sort of men are to follow Christ for awhile with the young man in the

gospel; but when they hear that all they have will be hazarded, it may be must be parted withal, they go away sorrowful. Sorry they are for awhile to leave that word or doctrine which before they had received with joy; as Matt. xiii. 20. but sorrowful as they are, love of the world overcomes all other considerations, and away they go. What multitudes such seasons have driven from the truth; what stars they have cast down from the heaven, no nation hath had greater experience than our own in the days of queen Mary; I pray God it never meet with another trial, and also hope that it is not likely so to do.

The other season where love of the world gives up men unto this fatal evil, is, when and where superstition and error are enthroned. We may look into some foreign nations where the gospel had once taken great place, especially a great part of the nobles were obedient unto the faith. But the supreme power of the nations abiding in the hands of those of the Roman profession, and therewith the disposal of authority, riches, and honour, those vain bubbles of the world, and idols of corrupted minds, it is known what influence it hath had upon the profession of religion; most of the posterity of those great and truly noble persons which once professed the Protestant religion being in most places fallen back into the old apostacy. For their minds being filled with the love of this world, and precipitated by ambition into a fierce pursuit of their desires, finding the way to worldly honour and wealth shut up unto all that would steadfastly adhere unto the truth, they have generally sacrificed their convictions, consciences, and souls unto this predominant lust. And such a season as this is more to be feared than persecution itself. Many have a generous stoutness not to be violently forced out of their persuasion and profession; but when these cursed baits are laid before men with various pretences to stifle their consciences, and advantages to keep up their reputation, there is no setting up a dam against the torrent of their love of this world. The warmth of the sun caused him to cast away his garment, which the blustering of the wind did but wrap closer about him. The rays of power in honours and favours have made more cast away their religion in the neighbouring nations, than persecutors ever could do. Whilst there-

fore the world is enthroned in the minds of men, whilst it is made their idol, whilst hopes of advance, and fears of loss, are the principal affections whereby their course of life is steered, profession of the truth stands upon very uncertain and ticklish terms. And therefore whilst we see that the minds of multitudes are under the power of this lust, all the security can be had of their continuance in the profession of the truth, is their not being led into either of the temptations mentioned.

I shall not insist on other depraved affections of the minds of men. The truth is, there is no one prevalent lust, no one predominant sin, no spiritual or moral disorder indulged unto, but it disposeth the soul first unto an undervaluation, and then a relinquishment of the truth, as occasions are offered.

VI. The hand of Satan is in this matter. He was the head of the first apostacy from God. Having himself fallen away from that place and order in the obediential part of the creation wherein he was made, the first work he engaged in (and he did it effectually), was to draw mankind into the guilt of the same crime and rebellion. And ever since the revelation of the means of recovery for man (from which he was justly excluded), he hath pursued the same design towards all unto whom that way of recovery is proposed. Thus he quickly carried away the whole old world upon the matter into idolatry. And ever since God hath been pleased to make known the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, his two great designs and works in the world have been, to keep men off from receiving the gospel, and to turn them aside who have received it. The first he managed two ways; first, by stirring up raging bloody persecutions against them that professed it, to deter others from engaging into the like way: and the other by blinding the eyes of men, and filling them with prejudices against the truth; as the apostle declares, 2 Cor. iv. 4. By what ways and means in particular he carried on this first design in both parts of it, belongs not unto our present inquiry. Failing herein, his principal design in the world hath been, and continueth yet to be, the corrupting of the minds of men about the truth, and drawing them off from it in part or in whole; so the apostle intimated, 2 Cor. xi. 3. 'I fear lest

by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' It was the serpent by whom Eve was beguiled, but who is it the apostle is jealous that the Corinthians might have their minds corrupted by from the simplicity that is in Christ; that is, by false doctrine, or as it were 'another gospel?' as he speaks, ver. 4. It was the same serpent, by himself and in his agents, as he expresseth it, ver. 14, 15. And he compareth his attempt to draw off professors from the gospel, unto his attempt on Eve, whereby he began the apostacy from God in the state of nature. The tenure of the covenant was proposed unto our first parents in the prohibition of 'eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil,' and the threatening annexed thereunto. And he beguiled Eve by corrupting the threatening by his false interpretation of it, whereby he corrupted her mind. The tenure of the covenant of grace is proposed unto us principally in the promises of the gospel, which are the centre of the whole doctrine of it. These therefore he endeavours by all means to pervert, in opposition unto the wisdom and grace of God in them. Hereby he hopes to draw off men from the simplicity that is in Christ, or the plain declaration of the will of God in the gospel, unto false and foolish imaginations of his own suggestion. And what a hand he was to have in the great apostacy, the apostle foretels, 2 Thess. ii. 9. 11. There was to be the working of Satan in it, and strong or effectual delusions unto the belief of lies, which are all from him who is the father of them. So men departed from the faith by 'giving heed to seducing spirits,' 1 Tim. iv. 1. that is, the devil and his agents. It would be too long a digression to engage into a particular inquiry, how, by what ways and means, Satan prevails with men to turn them off from the truth, and turn them unto fables. How he blinds their minds, how he inflames their lusts, how he presents occasions, how he suggests temptations with false and corrupt reasonings, what colours and pretences he puts upon his designs when he transforms himself into an angel of light, with what power, signs, and lying wonders, he gives countenance to his delusions, how he works on the minds of seducers, how on the minds of them that are to be seduced, how he stirs up

persecution against the truth and its profession; would require a discourse fully to declare longer than the whole of this is designed to be. It may suffice to know, that he is not weary nor wanting unto any of those manifold advantages which are administered unto him. He is at work in all places at this day, in some making havoc of the churches, in others by various wiles and artifices filling the minds of men with prejudices against the truth, and turning them from it.

Lastly, God doth not look on all these things as an unconcerned spectator. He indeed 'is not tempted with evil;' he tempteth none, he seduceth none, but he rules them all, and overrules all events unto his own glory. He will not suffer men first to undervalue and despise, and then to reject and forsake the chiefest of his mercies, such as his word and truth are, without reflecting on them with some acts of his severity. Wherefore, when men, from the corrupt principles mentioned, seduced by the lusts of their own hearts, and entangled by the deceits of Satan, do relinquish the truth, God in his holy righteous judgment gives them up unto farther delusions, so that they shall complete their apostacy, and grow obstinate therein unto their destruction. When a people, a nation, a church, or private persons have received the gospel and the profession thereof, not walking answerably thereunto, God may forsake them, and withdraw from them the means of their edification and preservation. The rule of his continuance with any people or church, as to the outward dispensation of his providence and the means of grace, is that expressed, 2 Chron. xv. 2. 'The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.' He judicially forsakes them by whom he is wilfully forsaken.

God may be forsaken by men in one way, and he may righteously forsake them in another: for instance, under the profession of the truth men may give up themselves unto all ungodliness and unrighteousness, unto a flagitious course of life in all abominations; so holding the truth captive in unrighteousness. In this case God ofttimes, in a way of punishment, gives men up unto an apostacy from the truth which they have professed, to shew that he will not

always have it prostituted unto the lusts of men. So the apostle speaks expressly, 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. Although they received the truth in the profession of it, yet they loved it not, they yielded not obedience unto it, but took pleasure in sin; therefore God ordered things so, that they should reject the truth itself also, and believe lies unto their own destruction. Herein at this day lies the danger of a total and ruinous apostacy. Multitudes, the generality of all sorts, the body of the people, do yet assent unto and profess the truth; but alas! what are the lives and conversations of many under that profession? How do all manner of sins abound among us? The profession of the truth by not a few is the greatest dishonour and disparagement that can be cast upon it. The best service many can do it, is by forsaking it, and declaring that the belief of it is inconsistent with their cursed wicked lives. And may we not justly fear, lest such persons should speedily be given up, by one means or other, to 'strong delusions to believe a lie' unto their just damnation? And on the other hand also, God sometimes gives men up to sins and wickednesses in practice, because of the rejection of the truth which they have received. So he dealt with them who liked not those notions of truth which they had concerning him, his being, and his providence, from the light of nature; Rom. i. 28. And so he usually deals with all apostates. If they will forsake the truth, they shall forsake righteousness and holiness, which are the proper fruits of it, and be given up unto all abominable lusts and practices.

We may therefore inquire, by what ways and means God doth so punish and revenge the beginnings of wilful apostacy from the gospel, so that men shall complete them and prove obstinate in them, unto their eternal destruction. And this he doth,

First, By removing his candlestick from among them. This the Lord Jesus threatens his backsliding church withal, Rev. ii. 5. God will by one means or another deprive them of the light and means of the knowledge of the truth, that ignorance and darkness shall cover them, and irresistibly increase upon them. Some of the instruments of light, it may be, shall be taken away by death, and some shall lie under prejudices; the gifts of the Spirit shall be

restrained or withheld from others, that they shall have darkness for vision, and 'the sword of the Lord shall be upon their right eye, that it shall be quite dried up.' In this condition of things the minds of apostates already bent upon backsliding, are by their ignorance and darkness more and more filled with prejudices against the truth, and alienated from it. For as they lose the knowledge and faith of any part of truth, their minds are possessed with what is opposite thereunto.

Secondly, In this condition God 'sends them strong delusions that they may believe a lie; 2 Thess. ii. 11. God is, as it were, now resolved on the end of these persons, what they have righteously deserved. And therefore he makes use of any means as it is merely penal to bring them thereunto. And as by the former act of his displeasure he took from them the knowledge of his truth, so by this he gives them up irrecoverably to adhere unto a lie; they shall not only profess it, but believe it, which is the cruellest slavery the mind of man is capable of. Now God's sending of men 'strong delusions that they may believe a lie,' consists in these things;

1. Delivering them up to the power of Satan. He is the grand seducer, the deluder of the souls of men, the first author of lying, whose principal design it is to win over the faith and assent of men thereunto. This work he stands continually ready for, but that God is pleased to limit, bound, and restrain him with respect unto those who are yet under his especial care; but as to these apostates, God breaks down all his fences about them, and by his efficacious permission suffers Satan to act his part to the utmost, for their delusion. This was the state of things under the papal apostacy; wherein Satan had deluded men (as it should seem), to the satisfaction of his utmost malice. And to shew how absolute he was in his success, he did, as it were, make sport with the deluded souls of men. There was nothing so foolish and sottish that he did not impose on their credulity. Many volumes will not contain the stories of those ridiculous follies which he hath so imposed on the minds of poor deluded mortals, wherein he seemed to sport himself in the misery of blinded mankind. God grant that he never receive a commission to act the same part

among us, whose sins seem to cry aloud for it; and men live as if they longed to be again given up to the power of the devil.

2. By suffering seducers and false teachers to come among a people, with such advantageous outward circumstances as shall further their success. These seducers prepare themselves for their work by their own inclinations and the suggestions of Satan. But God, for the executing of his just displeasure, will by his providence put advantages into their hands, of prevailing over the minds of men. So the chief seducers in the world at this day, namely, the pope and those acting with or under him, have possessed that place, and obtained that reputation among men, as gives them ofttimes an uncontrollable success in their work. Did men stand upon even ground with them who were in the profession of the truth, should any so come unto them to persuade them unto the errors, superstitions, and idolatry of the papacy, they could not but despise their offer. But these men having once gotten the name of 'The temple of God,' and shewing themselves to the people in the stead and place of God, what could they not draw and seduce them unto? Neither is their superstition or profession continued on any other grounds on the minds of the multitude, but only by that power over the consciences of men, which names, titles, and the places they seem to possess in the church, do give unto them. Then therefore doth God give up men to delusions, when in his providence he affords such advantages unto them by whom they are to be deluded. For those who possess the places of outward veneration may lead a backsliding multitude into what they please.

Lastly, God doth judicially smite such persons with blindness of mind and hardness of heart, that they shall not see, nor perceive, nor understand, even when the means of light and truth are proposed unto them. This effect of God's severity is declared, Isa. vi. 9—11. and application is made of it unto the Jews under the ministry of our Saviour himself, John xii. 40, 41. and that of the apostles, Acts xxviii. 29. and is expounded, Rom. xi. 8. When things are come to this issue, when God subducts the means of grace from men in the whole or in part, or as unto their efficacy, when he permits Satan to deceive them by

strong delusions, and moreover himself smites them with hardness of heart and blindness of mind; then is the state of such apostates miserable and irrecoverable. We are not therefore to think it strange, that the light of the gospel diffuses itself no more in the world; that so eminent a stop is put unto its progress. God hath put an end unto his gracious dealings with some kinds of apostates, and they are reserved for another dispensation of his providence.

These are some of the general principles of that defection which is in the world from the mystery and truth of the gospel, with the reasons and causes of them; unto which more, I doubt not, of the like nature may be added.

But there is moreover a particular consideration to be had of those especial truths which any turn away from, and the imaginations they fall into, whereof the especial grounds and reasons, superadded unto these we have considered, as equally respecting every kind of defection from the gospel, are also to be inquired into, and it shall be done in one instance among ourselves.

CHAP. VII.

Instance of a peculiar defection from the truth of the gospel; with the reasons of it.

Besides the reasons insisted on, which have a general influence into all apostacies from the doctrine or mystery of the gospel, each especial defection in every kind, hath reasons and causes peculiarly suited unto its rise and furtherance. There are indeed not a few who forsake the truth which they have professed, merely on the impressions of outward circumstances, in the encouraging examples of some who go before them in the same paths, from whom they expect advantage. And every age giveth us in one place or another renewed evidence, that where either secular interest, or weariness of the truth, through the love of the present world, and hatred of holiness, or strict evangelical obedience, do give a propensity unto a declension from any doctrines of the gospel, unto persons whose grandeur and outward

advantages are sufficient to attract a compliance from the minds of men under the power of ambition, or any importunate desire of earthly things, that multitudes of all sorts suppose there is nothing left for them but to crowd who shall come nearest the leaders in the apostacy. And it is not seldom that meeting with new temptations they outrun both them and themselves also, into such extremes as at first they designed not. For hence it is, that so many do even at present issue their recessions from the truth under the conduct of those 'ignes fatui' or erratic exhalations of countenance and favour, in the undesigned bogs of popery on the one hand, or Socinianism on the other. But I shall not at present take them into farther consideration, nor indeed are they worthy of any at all, whose minds are visibly biassed in the profession of things spiritual and heavenly, with those that are earthly and carnal.

They are of another sort from whom we may take an instance of the especial reasons of a peculiar defection from the gospel. For it is manifest how some among ourselves are fallen off from the whole mystery of it, with respect unto the person and grace of Christ, the satisfaction for sin made by his death, the atonement by the blood of his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and sanctification by his Spirit. If any shall think themselves unduly charged herein, they may be pleased to know, that none are intended but those who are really guilty. Whoever owns the things mentioned, though he will causelessly make use of peculiar words of his own for their expression, neither scriptural nor proper, nor such as believers have in former ages been accustomed unto, yet whilst the things themselves are believed and received, at present we lay nothing to his charge. But, unless to secure a groundless, useless, irrational charity, we wilfully shut our eyes and stop our ears, we cannot avoid the evidence that these things are by many even totally renounced. Yea, and this is done by them to the greatest disadvantage of themselves, and dishonour of the truth, that can be well imagined. For their profession is, that they have tried Christ and the gospel in these things, and find there is nothing in them for which they should abide in the faith of them, or place their confidence in them.

I hope none of them have gone unto that length as to cast themselves under the dreadful doom in the apostolical passage insisted on; but, that their condition is dangerous cannot be denied. To prevent the like state in ourselves and others, we may do well to consider, what are the true, real, next and immediate springs and reasons of such men's apostacy from the mystery of the gospel, as added unto the general reason of all apostacy of this kind before mentioned. For so it is, that besides those general reasons and causes, which have their efficacy and influence in all apostacies, and must always be considered in this matter; there are also reasons that are peculiar unto every especial instance of backsliding in any kind.

First, Ignorance of the necessity of Jesus Christ and the benefits of his mediation unto life and salvation, hath betrayed them first into an indifferency about them, and then a defection from them. They want a true and, in their own souls, a full conviction of their personal want of these things. Such apostates arise out of loose notional professors, who never had any sound convictions of the want of Christ; like them, Acts ii. 37. or him, Acts xvi. 30. And although they lived, some of them, a long time in the outward profession that such a conviction of the worth and use of Christ and his grace was necessary unto them that would be saved; yet dare they not own that ever themselves had any such conviction. For if they had, why do they now forsake him as unto those ends for which they were convinced he was so to be desired? That faith alone will never forsake Christ, which springs out of, or is built on, a conviction of the want of him. They who are well and in health will not always esteem the physician.

Unto this conviction of the want of Christ two things are required in all men, according to the measure of the light which they have received.

1. The knowledge of the nature, guilt, filth, and desert of sin. For he came to save us from our sin. And no man will look after him to be delivered from he knows not what; or look to the brazen serpent, who is not stung. Few have any knowledge hereof but what they cannot avoid, and fewer are sensible of these things in a due manner. The great design of Satan at this day in the world is, to exte-

nuate sin in opinion, and so countenance it in practice. Indeed it ever was so; but it is in a peculiar manner at present visible and open, though the conspiracy be so strong, that a public resistance unto it is scarcely maintainable. His aim in it is and ever was, to take off from the necessity and usefulness of Christ and his grace, against which his malice is principally bent. And when once he can convey away the relief, he will be ready enough to aggravate the evil. Hence are those opinions so diligently advanced and greedily embraced, against the guilt and power of original sin, and the depravation of our natures, wherein men of all sorts conspire. Whatever some men may design, his end in them all is no other but to prevent a conviction of the want we have of Christ. So also are sins in practice extenuated, spiritual sins against the gospel are made nothing of, yea, laughed at; and immoralities against the law are lightly esteemed, and easily passed over. To take off at present a sense of the want of Christ, and to make way for future apostacy, is the end of these and the like corrupt opinions. Accordingly it is come to pass in the world. Never was there less regard of the person and offices of Christ, of his grace, and benefits of his mediation, among them that are called Christians, than is found among many at this day. Unless God graciously relieve, the world is like to lose Christ out of the gospel, as to the true glory of his person, and use of his mediation. Thus was it with the generality of them concerning whom we speak; they never had a thorough practical conviction of the want of Christ; for if they had, they would not so shamefully have left him as they have done. The general notions they had hereof, serve only to entitle them unto a defection. I know these things are despised by many, unto whom the want of Christ, and the receiving of him, or an interest in him, are contemptible things. But that is all one; we must not forego the gospel, with our own experience, and ruin our souls to escape their reproaches. Sin will be sin, and Christ will be Christ, and salvation by him will be what it is, when they have done what they can.

2. Hereunto is required a knowledge and sense of the weakness of the best of our duties, and their utter insufficiency to abide the trial in the sight of God. Without the

former we cannot have, and without the latter we can never abide in, a sense of the want of Christ. A right consideration of the instability of our minds in them, the weak actings of grace for the most part, the weariness of the flesh that accompanies them, secret impressions from self, and inward oppositions from sin that attend them, with the greatness and holiness of God with whom we have to do in them, is indispensably necessary to keep the Lord Christ and his grace always desirable unto us. Want hereof makes some dream of a perfection in themselves, and others of a justification by their own obedience; the first tending to the contempt, the latter unto the neglect of Christ and his grace. This is the beginning of transgression unto many apostates. They never had a due sense of the want of Christ, either as to their deliverance from the guilt of sin, or as to the procuring of a righteousness wherewith they might appear in the presence of God. This are they to inquire after, who shall endeavour their recovery. To contend with them about their own imaginations, is for the most part endless and fruitless. Let it be inquired, whether they ever had any conviction of the want of Christ for the pardon of sin, or for the obtaining of life and salvation? If they shall grant they had, it may be asked, why they do not make use of him unto the ends with respect whereunto they were convinced of the want of him? and if they do so, we have no contest with them in this matter. If they acknowledge that they never had any such conviction, this is that which we are to confirm, that such a conviction of the want of Christ, is indispensably necessary unto the salvation of all that are adult. And herein we have the testimony (upon the matter) of the whole Scripture, the law, and the gospel, to confirm the truth we contend for. Want therefore hereof was one spring of this defection. For, those who have owned the necessity of him, or an interest in him, for the ends mentioned; and afterward declare, that there is nothing of goodness or truth in what they have found and discovered, for which they should continue so to do, their profession is, that they have considered this matter, known it, and do condemn it; wherein the formal nature of apostacy doth consist. And all those disciples which they draw after them, they do it, by hiding from them or drawing them

off from any sense of a want of Christ, or of his mediation. That which is the foundation of our profession in opposition hereunto, which we lay the weight of all our eternal concerns upon, is, that without Christ, before we receive him as set forth by God to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, we are in a lost, undone, and accursed condition; that our closing with him, our believing in him, is upon a conviction of our want of him for life, righteousness, and acceptation with God, both before and after believing. And it is in vain for Satan himself to attempt the faith of God's elect herein. A concurrence of plain revelation and evident experience is invincible. But he who never knew, who never was made deeply sensible of the want of an interest in Christ, will never persevere in the pursuit of it, nor abide in what he hath attained when attacked by any vigorous temptation.

Secondly, Want of a spiritual view of the excellency of Christ both in his person and offices, is another spring and cause of this declension from the faith of the gospel. This view of him in types, shadows, and promises, was the life of the faith of the saints under the Old Testament. Herein 'Abraham saw his day and rejoiced;' John viii. 5, 6. So Cant. ii. 8. 17. And it is mentioned as their chiefest privilege, Isa. xxxiii. 17. These things they 'diligently inquired into,' 1 Pet. i. 11. and 'longed after,' desiring (if it were possible) to 'see them;' Matt. xiii. 17. For the glory and life of all religion, of all intercourse with God, lay in them from the giving of the first promise. Christ was 'all and in all' unto them no less than unto us. Take a respect unto him and his offices out of the old administrations, and they are things of no value or signification. And it was better for them who were inquiring after Christ diligently under dark types and shadows, than it will be for those among us who shut their eyes at the glorious light of the gospel. And the reason why he was rejected by the Jews at his coming, (for 'he came unto his own, and his own received him not;' John i. 11.) was, because they could 'see neither form, nor comeliness, nor beauty in him, why he should be desired;' Isa. liii. 2. None can or will abide constant in his doctrine who are not able spiritually to discern the glory of his person and offices. Hence the apostles lay it down as the foun

dation of their faith, that 'they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;' John i. 14. And that which they had in themselves they endeavoured to communicate unto others, that they 'also might believe through their word, and have fellowship with him;' 1 John i. 3. So he himself makes this the foundation of his church, the rock upon which he will build it. For on the confession of Peter, that he was 'the Christ, the Son of the living God' (which expresseth the glory both of his person as the Son of the living God, and of his offices as the Christ), he says, 'On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;' Matt. xvi. 16—18. Whoever builds not hereon, builds on the sand, and will be prevailed against. So our apostle declares, that those that 'hold him not as the head,' will be beguiled, and 'vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds,' falling into foolish errors, and vain curiosities;' Col. ii. 18, 19. And he rests the whole foundation of all gospel faith in this glory of his person and offices; Heb. i. 2, 3. Col. i. 15—20. It is this knowledge of him alone, that will make us disesteem and despise all other things in comparison of him; Phil. iii. 8. 10.

Wherefore, a spiritual view of him, an acquaintance with him, as 'the brightness of the glory of the Father, and the express image of his person,' as he in whom all the perfections of the divine nature, as wisdom, goodness, and grace, do centre, as to their manifestation, even in the union of his natures, the glory of his offices, the suitableness of his person and grace unto all the wants and desires of the souls of men, is indispensably necessary unto our preservation from apostacy. And I could easily manifest by particular instances, that a failing herein hath had a principal and prevalent influence into all the apostacies that have been in the Christian world, both as unto faith and worship. It is, though a new, yet a most wicked attempt that Satan is making by some against the whole of our religion, whilst allowing his person to be what it is (which for secular ends they dare not deny), they endeavour to render him of little or no use in our profession. This is to fight neither against small nor great, but against the King of Israel. And if such serpentine attempts be not prevented, the public profession

of religion among us will issue in atheism, or somewhat of a near alliance thereunto.

Thus it seems to be with some of them of whom we speak. They had, among other notional professors, an historical knowledge of Christ, and thereof made profession; but they were never spiritually acquainted with the glorious excellencies of his person and offices: for if they had, they would not have forsaken the 'great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh,' for other uncouth notions of their own. Who can think it possible, that any one who hath known the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, the Son of God incarnate, receiving our nature into an hypostatical union with himself, and a blessed subsistence in his own person, as proposed unto us in the gospel, as evidently therein crucified before our eyes, as the 'apostle and high-priest of our profession,' as our advocate with the Father, as making peace for us and reconciliation through the blood of his cross, as made of God unto us 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;' who ever had experience or benefit in their temptations and trials of his love, care, tenderness, compassion, readiness, and ability to succour them that 'come to God by him;' can renounce all these things, to betake themselves to vain notions of a light and perfection of their own in their stead? I hope they are few who do so practically, but the expressions of many have a dangerous aspect that way. And it is certain, there is nothing more necessary unto all that are called Christians, than to have clear distinct notions in themselves of the person of Christ, and plainly to declare, how they place their whole faith, hope, and trust in him. And for such as really do so, though not able to express themselves in a due manner, yea, though unduly captivated unto some novel conceptions and expressions, the good Lord pardon them, and let mercy and peace be on them, and on the whole Israel of God. Whereas, therefore, some who have made a profession of these things do now relinquish them, I shall pray they may take heed that they do not thereby 'crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.' Neither is it a verbal acknowledgment in owning that Christ which suffered at Jerusalem, which will free any from this charge and guilt. Unless the Lord Christ, that Christ which is God and man in one per-

son, be owned, received, believed in, loved, trusted unto, and obeyed in all things, as he is proposed unto us in the Scripture, and with respect unto all the ends of righteousness, holiness, life, and salvation, for which he is so proposed, he is renounced and forsaken. Who can sufficiently express the cunning sleights of Satan? who can sufficiently bewail the foolishness of the hearts of men, that after they have (at least doctrinally) known and professed these things, they should be turned aside from the glory, truth, and holiness of them? Let Christians therefore know and beware, that if they find any decay in faith, love, delight, and trust in the person and mediation of Christ, they are in the way that leads to some cursed apostacy of one kind or another.

But where the divine person of Christ is denied, or all acquaintance with him is despised; where the communication of grace from him unto believers is scorned, where no use by faith of his love, care, compassion, and power, as our high-priest and advocate with the Father in our duties, sins, temptations, and sufferings, is allowed, we need not represent the danger of falling into apostacy; such persons are already in the depth of it. I speak this with the more earnestness, because, of all the evils which I have seen in the course of my pilgrimage (now hastening unto its period), there hath been none more grievous than the public contempt I have lived to see cast on the person of Christ, as to its concernment in our religion, and the benefits we receive from him. But God taketh care of these things.

Thirdly, Want of experience of the power and efficacy of the Spirit and grace of Christ, of his life and death for the mortification of sin, hath been another spring of this apostacy. How it is wrought by these means, and can be no otherwise accomplished, I have shewed elsewhere at large, and must not here assume the same argument again. Only two things may be observed concerning this work and duty. As,

1. It is that wherein, or whereunto the greatest wisdom and exercise of faith doth consist, or is required. It is a matter purely evangelical to derive strength and ability from Christ for the mortification of sin, by virtue of his death, in a way of believing. Unenlightened reason can neither see nor understand any thing of this matter, yea, it is foolishness

unto it, as are all other mysteries of the gospel. There is not any other way for the same end, which it will not more willingly embrace.

2. It is a work and duty whereunto there is a great reluctancy in the flesh, in corrupted nature. There is nothing it had rather be freed from, and that whether we respect the inward nature of it, or the constant continuance in it that is required of us. Yet is it such, as that without it we can never attain life and salvation; 'for if we by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live,' and not otherwise. Wherefore, when men once begin to be sensible of the powerful inward workings of sin, they will take one of these two ways, nor can they do otherwise; for either they will yield themselves up 'servants unto sin,' and make 'provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof,' according as they are able, and as far as consists with their secular interest, as do the most; or they will betake themselves to some way or other for its restraint and mortification, either in part or in whole. And here many things will present themselves unto such persons, some, it may be, of their own devising, and some of God's appointment, but for other ends than what they apply them unto. Hence multitudes faint in this work, and at length utterly give it over. They begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. For not striving lawfully, nor in the right way, sin gets ground and strength against them, and they yield up themselves to the service of it. Hence have we so many, who having under their convictions contended against their lusts in their youth, do give up themselves unto them in their age. But so it is in this matter, that those who through their unbelief cannot arise or attain unto an experience of the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ for the mortification of sin, will betake themselves to somewhat else for their relief. And this is that principally which hath brought forth that light within among some, which must do all this work for them, and much more. If any will betake themselves thereunto, they shall find that remedy against sin, and that perfection of holiness in a few days, which they had been looking for from Christ a long season to no purpose. So would they have us to think, who, it may be, never had experience what it is to derive spiritual strength from Christ, or to wait on him for it; only they

have been wearied by the successlessness of their convictions, and the burdensomeness of lifeless duties. For some of them were for a season not only sober in their conversation (which I hope they yet continue to be), but diligent in duties of religion. But finding neither life, power, nor success in them, through their own uncured unbelief, they seem to have grown weary of them. For nothing is more grievous than the outward form of spiritual duties, where there is no experience of inward power and sweetness. Wherefore, the corrupt minds of men will be ready to relinquish them, for any thing that pretends a better relief.

What was the reason that so many in the papacy betook themselves to penances, severe disciplines, and self-macerations, for the relief of their consciences with respect unto the mortification of sin? It all sprang from this root, or ignorance of the power and efficacy of the Spirit and grace of Christ for that end. Somewhat must be done unto this purpose, and not knowing the right way and gospel method of it, they betook themselves unto what they could invent, or what was imposed on them by the superstition of others, that pretended to afford them a relief. Somewhat hereof those among us seemed for awhile to make an appearance of, in an outward gravity, and seeming austerity of life; but the things themselves they had no mind unto, as not compliant with other interests they had to pursue. But the light within shall do all of this kind for them; wherefore, in comparison thereof, and as unto this end at least, they reject the Lord Christ, and do what in them lies to 'put him to open shame.' For what do they less, who declare, that that is done in a few days for them by another means, which could not be effected by the faith which for so long a season they professed in him? But the cause of the whole lies solely in their own ignorance, and want of experience of the things which themselves professed.

Fourthly, Ignorance of the righteousness of God, hath been another spring of this apostacy. This the apostle expressly declares to be the reason why men go about to establish a righteousness of their own; Rom. x. 3. 'Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted unto the righteousness of God.' And this he speaks of the

Jews, and that the best of them, 'who followed after righteousness, and sought it, as it were by the works of the law;' Rom. ix. 31, 32. Of all men they thought themselves most knowing of the 'righteousness of God,' for they made 'their boast of God, and knew' (as they thought and professed) 'his will, and approved the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and were confident that they themselves were guides of the blind, and the light of them that are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes, having the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law;' Rom. ii. 17—20. Yet these men 'submitted not to the righteousness of God, but went about to establish their own righteousness, because they were ignorant of the righteousness of God.' And wheresoever this ignorance is, men will do so.

Take 'the righteousness of God' in any sense, wherein it is mentioned in the Scripture, and this event will follow upon the ignorance thereof. For it must be either the righteousness that is in him, or the righteousness he requires of us in the law, or the righteousness he hath provided for us in the gospel. Consider it any of these ways, and the ignorance of it is that which countenanceth men in betaking themselves unto a righteousness of their own, yea, unavoidably casteth them upon it. For,

1. A right understanding of the infinite purity, the glorious essential holiness of the nature of God, of his absolute eternal righteousness, as the Lord and judge of all, will teach men what apprehensions they ought to have of any thing done in them, or by them. 'Our God is a consuming fire;' Heb. xii. 29. 'A God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; Hab. i. 13. 'Who will in nowise acquit the guilty;' Exod. xxxiv. 7. 'Whose judgment it is, that they who commit sin are worthy of death;' Rom. i. 32. 'A holy God, a jealous God, that will not forgive transgressions and sins;' Josh. xxiv. 19. Whilst the dread and terror of the excellency of his holiness and righteousness is before men, they will not easily betake themselves and their trust unto a righteousness of their own. There are two sorts of persons that the Scripture represents under an apprehension of this righteousness of God. The first are convinced, guilty sinners, and the other humble, holy believers: and what thoughts of

themselves each sort is thereon filled withal, it doth declare. For the former sort, we have an instance in Adam, Gen. iii. 10. In others, Isa. xxxiii. 14. as also Micah vi. 7. The sum is, they can think of nothing, have no other conceptions in their minds, but how either they may fly from him, and hide themselves; or feign to themselves impossible ways of atonement; or be swallowed up in horror and despair. Send them in this condition unto a righteousness of their own, and they will easily understand you do but reproach their misery. And for the other sort, or humble, holy believers, we may see also how on this occasion they express themselves in this matter; Job iv. 17—19. ix. 2. Psal. cxxx. 3. cxliii. 6. They all jointly acknowledge, that such is the glorious holiness and righteousness of God, such the imperfection of our righteousness, and impurity of our works, that there is no appearance or standing before him on their account. It is the want of a due meditation hereof, that hath produced the many presumptuous opinions in the world concerning the justification of sinners. The Scripture, speaking of justification, directs us to conceive 'it in the sight of God,' Psal. ciii. 2. or 'before him;' Rom. iii. 20. Teaching us, that in this matter we should set ourselves as in the presence, and under the eye of this holy God, and then consider on what ground we may stand before him. But where men are 'ignorant of this righteousness of God,' when they have secret thoughts that he is 'altogether such a one as themselves,' as the psalmist speaks; that is, one who is either not so holy in himself as is pretended, or one who doth not require a suitableness in us unto his holiness, but is little concerned in our duties, less in our sins; is it any wonder if men think they can of themselves do that which is satisfactory unto him, and so 'go about to establish their own righteousness?' And this way even in teaching have some betaken themselves unto. They endeavour to satisfy their disciples that there is no such severity in God against sin as some pretend, no such holiness in his nature as necessarily to infer an indignation against every sin; that they are but vain frights, and needless disquietments, which either their own consciences or the preaching of some men do put them unto. And if they can prevail to be credited herein, there is no doubt but that those whom

they so persuade, will be pleased with their own righteousness; but whether God in this matter of justification will be pleased with it or no, is not so easy to be determined:

And hence it is, that all opinions of a self-righteousness or justification by works, have always produced licentiousness of life, though they who assert it clamorously pretend to the contrary. So when a righteousness of works was absolutely enthroned in the papacy, before the reformation, the lives of the generality of men were flagitiously wicked, and most of the good works that were performed amongst them, were but barterings with God and conscience, for horrible vices and impieties. According also unto the growth of the same opinion, in its various degrees among us, is the progress also of all sorts of impiety and licentiousness of life. And if the masters of these opinions would but open their eyes, they would see, that whereas they assert their justification by works, under a pretence of a necessity so to do, for the maintenance of holiness and righteousness among men, that unholiness, unrighteousness, intemperance of life, and all abominations do grow upon them, such as were not heard of in former days, among them who made any profession of religion. And the reason hereof is, because the very same notions of God which will allow men to suppose that they may be justified in his sight by their own duties, will also accommodate their lusts with several apprehensions that he will not be so severe against their sins, as is supposed. However this is plain in matter of fact, that the opinion of self-righteousness, and looseness of conversation in the practice of sin, have gone together generally, from the days of the Pharisees, to this present season. And as this proud conceit receives daily advancement in several degrees, under various pretences, it is to be feared the world will be more and more filled with the bitter fruits thereof. It is grace, and the doctrine of it, as well as its power, that must put a stop to sin. He that drives men into a righteousness of their own at one door, opens another unto their sins. And all that we have got hitherto by fierce disputations about justification as it were by works, is only that the faith of some hath been weakened, the peace of multitudes disquieted, differences increased, without the least evidence of holiness improved, or the vices of men reformed by them. And

it will not be granted, that the strictest professors in these days (whether they have imbibed these opinions or no), do in real holiness and fruitfulness of life exceed those of the foregoing age, who firmly, and without hesitation, trusted unto the Lord Christ alone, for life, righteousness, and salvation.

2. Suppose the righteousness God requires of us in the law to be intended; the ignorance thereof also is a great reason why men venture on a righteousness of their own, and go about to establish it. Were they indeed acquainted with the purity, spirituality, severity, and inexorableness of the law, they would never be possessed with imaginations, that the perfection which they dream of in themselves would endure its trial. But when men shall suppose that the law respects only outward duties, and those also of the greatest notoriety, as to sin and obedience, and can relieve themselves in sundry things by pharisaical distinctions and expositions of it, when they consider not, or understand not the extent of it, unto an exacting of the entire image of God in us, wherein we were created, unto the regulating all the frames, figments, and first motions of the heart, and its application of the course unto the least deviation from it; they may please or some way satisfy themselves by establishing a righteousness of their own, as it were 'by the works of the law.'

But, 3. The righteousness of God in this place is taken principally for that righteousness which he hath provided for us in the gospel. And what this is, the apostle declares in the next verse; 'For,' says he, 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, unto every one that believeth;' ver. 4. And this he calls 'the righteousness which is of faith;' chap. ix. 30. Wherefore, the righteousness of God is Christ as fulfilling the law, and answering the end of it, received by faith. This is that righteousness of God, which whosoever are ignorant of, and submit not unto, they will go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and trust unto it. And thus hath it openly and visibly fallen out with them concerning whom we treat. They will not deny but that under their convictions, they were solicitous after a righteousness with which God might be well pleased. And if they should deny it, they were not to be believed; because

it is impossible it should be otherwise with any in that condition: for conviction is principally a sense of the want of a righteousness. In this state the gospel which they had, and which it may be they heard preached, presented unto them, 'Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, unto them that do believe;' as it is fully declared, Rom. iii. 21—25. with chap. v. 18, 19. This divers of them for a season professed themselves to embrace and acquiesce in. But when things came to the trial, it generally appeared that they had all along been ignorant of this 'righteousness of God;' for they have left it for a righteousness of their own, which had they truly and really known it, they could not have done. He who hath ever truly and really made Christ the end of the law for righteousness unto himself by believing, will not cast contempt and scorn upon his righteousness imputed unto us, as it is the manner of some to do. But herein is the Son of God in some measure 'crucified afresh, and put unto open shame.' When men shall profess that they did look after righteousness by him, and would have received him as the end of the law for righteousness, but not finding that therein which they expected, they have betaken themselves to a righteousness wholly within them, and so wholly their own; they will not easily contrive a way whereby they may reflect more dishonour upon him. Whatever pretences may be made to the contrary, whatever maze of words any may lead men into, and tire them withal, whatever revilings, and reproaching of others they may compass them with, they cannot but know in their own consciences that it is thus with them; notwithstanding any profession that they ever made, they never did come, nor ever could attain unto, a real knowledge of, and acquaintance with, this righteousness of God, so as to receive it by faith, and obtain thereby rest unto their souls. And thence it is that as unto profession at least, they have betaken themselves unto an endeavour 'to establish their own righteouness,' which if it produce and effect a real holy conversation and righteousness in them of any long continuance, they are the first in whom it ever had that effect in this world, and will be the last in whom it shall find that success.

Fifthly, Want of submission under the sovereignty of God, hath contributed unto the furtherance of this evil. The

sovereignty of God acting itself in infinite wisdom and grace, is the sole foundation of the covenant of grace, and runs through the whole mystery of the gospel. Thence proceeded the incarnation of the Son of God, and his being filled with all grace to be a Saviour; John iii. 16. Col. i. 19. John i. 16. Other account thereof none can be given. Thence was his substitution as the surety of the covenant in our stead, to undergo the punishment due to our sins; Isa. liii. 6. 10. 2 Cor. v. 21. Eternal election flows from thence, and is regulated thereby; Rom. ix. 11. 18. So doth effectual vocation, Matt. xi. 25, 26. and justification by faith; Rom. iii. 30. The like may be said of all other mysteries of the gospel. Love, grace, goodness, dispensed in a way of sovereign, unaccountable pleasure, are in them all proposed as the objects of our faith. The carnal mind is pleased with nothing of all this, but riseth up in opposition unto every instance of it. It will not bear that the will, wisdom, and pleasure of God, should be submitted unto and adored in the paths which it cannot trace. Hence the incarnation and cross of the Son of God are foolishness unto it; 1 Cor. i. 23—25. The decrees of God as to election and reprobation, unjust and unequal, overthrowing all religion; Rom. ix. 17—21. Justification through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, that which everts the law, and renders all our own righteousness unnecessary. So in the whole mystery, in all the doctrine, precepts, or promises of the gospel, that spring from, or are resolved into the sovereignty of God, the carnal mind riseth up in opposition unto them all. For whereas the formal nature of faith consisteth in giving glory to God, by believing the things that are above reason as it is ours, and against it as carnal; Rom. iv. 18—21. this sets up an enmity unto it in all things. It is therefore always tumultuating against the mysteries of the gospel; and if it once come to make itself the judge of them, taking aid from sensual affections, and the vain imaginations of the mind, it will make havoc of all the articles of faith. And thus it seems to have fallen out in this matter. Those concerning whom we treat, seem to have cast off a due regard unto the soveriegnty of God, because themselves were never bowed by faith savingly thereto. Wherefore, in an opposition unto it, they have set up their light within, as the rule, measure,

and judge of the truths and doctrines of the gospel. Instead of becoming fools by a resignation of their reason and wisdom to the sovereignty of God, that so they might in the issue be really wise, they have become wise in their own conceit, and have waxed vain in their foolish imaginations. Neither indeed is there any broader way of apostacy from the gospel, than a rejection of God's sovereignty in all things concerning the revelation of himself and our obedience, with a refusal to 'bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of faith,' which first brought forth Pelagianism, and of late Socinianism, as hath been shewed, from which two the whole of the present defection is derived.

Sixthly, We may add hereunto, as another spring of this partial apostacy, want of an evidence in themselves of the divine authority of the Scriptures. It is not enough to establish any man in the profession of the gospel, to own in general that the Scripture is the word of God, or a divine revelation of his will. He that hath not an experience of a divine authority in it upon his own soul and conscience, will not be steadfast when his trial shall come. God looks with regard unto them alone who tremble at his word, as owning his present authority in it. Where this doth not abide upon them, unlearned and unstable men (as the apostle speaks) will be bold to wrest the Scriptures to their destruction, or to prefer other things before them, or at least to equalize them with them. It is not therefore enough that we assent unto the truth of the word of God, unless also we are sensible of its power, and of that claim which it makes in the name of God, of the absolute subjection of our whole souls and consciences unto it. Now this evidence in themselves of this present divine authority, differing it unconceivably from all other real or pretended conveyances of truth, these persons either never had, or have insensibly lost, or cast off openly, the yoke of God therein. Hereon every imagination of their own exalts itself into an equality of right and authority with it. The end of these things is, that God gives men up to 'strong delusions to believe a lie,' because they 'received not, or retained not the truth in the love thereof;' 2 Thess. ii. And when once it comes unto this, it is the work of Satan (which he easily accomplisheth), both to suggest unto them end-

less delusions, and to render them so obstinate therein, as that they shall despise every thing that is tendered unto conviction.

This is the first way whereby men fall away from the gospel, namely, from the mystery and doctrine of it as it is the object of our faith; wherein they do what in them lies 'to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put him unto open shame.'

CHAP. VIII.

Apostacy from the holiness of the gospel; the occasion and cause of it. Of that which is gradual, on the pretence of somewhat else in its room.

There is, secondly, a falling away from the gospel, with respect unto the holiness of its precepts, which is to be the matter, as they are the rule of our obedience. And this also is of a nature no less perilous, and attended with consequents and effects no less dangerous than the former, and doth no less than that expose the Son of God to open shame. Yea, an apostacy from the holiness of the gospel, is on many accounts more dreadful and dangerous than a partial apostacy from its truth. For as it is more spreading and catholic than that is, and of less observation or esteem; so it is usually more irrecoverable, most men under it being greatly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Besides, commonness hath taken off the sense of its evil and danger. If there be an error broached against the doctrine of the gospel, it is odds but some or other will take notice of it, confute it, and warn all men of the danger wherewith it is attended. But let the whole world (as it were) lie in evil, let the generality of mankind drown themselves in lusts and pleasures, let the lives and conversations of men be as contrary to the rule of the gospel as darkness is to light, so they make no disorder in this or that way of outward worship, and be either good Catholics, or good Protestants, or any thing else of that kind; he shall scarcely escape the censure of peevishness and severity (it may be of self-conceitedness and hypocrisy) who shall reflect any great blame on these things. And yet notwithstanding this

partiality in judgment or practice, with respect unto these evils, it is generally acknowledged that it is possible that men may please God and be accepted with him, notwithstanding many mistakes, errors, and misconceptions of their minds about spiritual things: but that any one should ever come unto the enjoyment of him, who lives and dies impenitently in any sin against the rule and tenour of that holiness which the gospel requireth, I know as yet none that pleadeth. For once to pretend that men may live in, and habitually act, any known sin, without striving against it, labouring for repentance, and endeavouring its mortification, is all one as avowedly to attempt the overthrow of Christian religion. Wherefore, on these and sundry other considerations, this latter sort of apostacy from the holiness of the gospel, is at least as perilous, as much to be opposed, and contended against, as that which is from the mystery and doctrine of it; and that whereof the generality of men are more earnestly to be warned, as the evil whereunto they are more obnoxious than to the other. And we do conjoin both these together, not only as those which are of the same tendency, and do alike both ruin the souls of men, and put the Lord Christ to open shame, but also as those concerning which we are forewarned, that they shall enter into and come in the world together in the latter days. And whatever sense the latter days mentioned in the Scripture may be taken in, either those of the world and of religion in general, or of the particular churches whereunto men may belong, they are unquestionably come upon us; whose danger and duty therefore is declared in these preadmonitions. Wherefore, of the first our apostle speaketh, 1 Tim. iv. 1. 'The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.' I doubt not but this prediction had its signal accomplishment in the papacy; and am well persuaded, that the Holy Ghost had respect in particular unto those principles and practices which a learned person of this nation hath laid open, under the title of The Apostacy of the latter Times. But we find also by woful experience, and that renewed almost every day, that it hath respect unto us also and the times wherein we live.

The entrance and coming of that kind of apostacy which we have now designed to treat of, is in like manner foretold, 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. The sum of what the apostle there instructeth us, is, That in these latter times, under an outward profession of the gospel, men should give up themselves unto the pursuit of the vilest lusts, and the practice of the most abominable sins. And we fear this prediction is in like manner fulfilled.

Now although these things are evil and dangerous, both in their own nature and tendency, especially as they come together and make their joint attempt against the honour of Christ, and the salvation of the professors of the gospel; yet this prediction of them, and pre-admonition concerning them, may be of advantage unto them that are sincere and upright, if duly improved.

For, (1.) If this twofold ruinous apostacy will and doth press upon us, on whom these ends of the world are come, we ought surely to stand upon our guard, that we be not surprised with it, nor overcome by it. How ought we to spend our sojourning here in fear! It was the advice of him whose confidence had like to have been his ruin. It is assuredly no time for any to be careless and secure, who design or so much as desire to be preserved from this fatal evil. However, we cannot any of us plead that we were not warned of our danger, nor called on for that circumspection and watchfulness, that care and diligence, that earnestness for divine help and assistance, which our condition requireth, and which will be a means of deliverance and safety. And,

(2.) Being found in the way of our own duty, we need not be greatly moved or shaken in our minds when we see these things come to pass. It may be, a prospect of the state of religion at this day in the world is ready to terrify the minds of some, at least to fill them with amazement. For if things should always so proceed, they may be afraid lest Christian religion should at length lose all its beauty and glory. But these things are all of them punctually foretold, whereby the efficacy of the temptation from their coming to pass is prevented. Yea, considering that all our faith is resolved into the Scripture, and built on the infallibility of its prophecies and predictions, seeing they

are foretold, the temptation would be accompanied with more vigour and efficacy if we saw them not come to pass, than it is now we do; seeing it is evident from other circumstances, that we are fallen into the latter days, which the accomplishment of these predictions renders unquestionable. See Matt. xxiv. 9—13. 24. Acts xx. 29, 30. 2 Thess. ii. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 3. 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. And the truth is, there was never any persuasion more pernicious befell the minds of men, than that churches, this or that church, or any church, are not, or is not liable or obnoxious unto these decays, declensions, and apostacies; or that any in them, or of them, can be preserved from them, without the utmost care and diligence in attending unto the means appointed for their preservation. When the Jews fell into such a foolish confidence with respect unto their temple and worship, God was wont to bid them go to Shiloh, and see what was become thereof; as assuring them that what fell out in one time and place, might do so in another. And we know how it was in this matter with the first Christian churches, and how soon (as hath been declared), Rev. ii. 4, 5. iii. 1—4. 14—17. We may go to them and learn how vain are all the pretences of outward privileges and exemptions; for assuredly, 'unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish.'

That therefore which we shall now inquire into, is, the nature, the causes, and occasions, of that apostacy or falling off from the holiness of the gospel in churches and by particular persons, which is thus foretold to fall out in the latter days, and hath done so accordingly. And we shall have respect herein both unto that general apostacy of this kind which fell out in former ages under the conduct of the Roman church principally, and that also which by various ways and means is at present prevailing in the world. And some things must be premised unto our consideration hereof.

1. The doctrine of the gospel is a doctrine of holiness; this it teacheth, requireth, and commandeth; this the mysteries and grace of it lead unto; this the precepts of it require, and this the great example of its author proposed in it unto us, doth enjoin. And it doth not this as that which is convenient for us, or some way or other necessary unto us, but as that without which we can have no interest

in any of its promises. No unholy person hath any ground to expect the least advantage by the gospel here or hereafter. When all things come to their issue, and shall fall under eternal judgment according to the gospel, all other pleas and pretences will utterly and for ever fail them who are 'workers of iniquity;' Matt. vii. 22, 23.

2. The holiness which the gospel requireth is an obedience of another nature and kind than what is required by any other doctrine or way of instruction. The law of nature continueth to suggest unto us many important duties towards God, ourselves, and other men. The written law is an exact representation of all those moral duties which were required of us in the state wherein we were created. But there is a holiness required by the gospel, which although it include these things within the compass of its law and order, yet (on sundry considerations) is of another kind than what is required by those laws, in the manner wherein it is required in them. For it proceedeth from other principles, on another formal reason and motives, hath other essential properties, acts, duties, and ends, than the obedience by them required hath. This hath been so fully evinced in our discourse of the nature and necessity of gospel holiness, that it need not be here again insisted on.

3. Together with the light and doctrine of the gospel, or the preaching of it, there is an administration of the Spirit to convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This God hath promised, Isa. lix. 21. and this the Lord Christ doth effect, wherever the word is orderly dispensed according unto his mind and will; John xvi. 7—11. Hereby are men wrought upon unto a profession of this holiness, and expression of it in outward duties. For all that religion which hath any thing of truth and reality in it in the world, is an effect of the word and Spirit of Christ. Multitudes in all ages have hereby been made really holy, and many yet continue so to be. These (as we believe) shall never fall utterly from it, but shall be preserved by the power of God through faith unto salvation. But yet such as these also may decay as unto degrees in holiness, and the fruitfulness of it. And in every such decay there is a partial apostacy, and much dishonour unto Jesus Christ; nor doth any man know in that condition but that in the issue as to

his particular, it may be total and destructive to his soul. Thus was it with those churches and persons whom our Lord Jesus Christ chargeth to have lost their first faith and love, whom he admonisheth to remember whence they are fallen, and to repent. And it is principally for the sake of these, that Christ and the gospel be not dishonoured by them, nor their eternal concernments hazarded, and those who in the use of means are in a thriving progress towards the same condition, that the ensuing cautions and warnings are prepared. And others there are who are brought only unto a profession of this holiness, in inward convictions and outward duties. And although they are not yet arrived unto a full possession of its power and conformity unto its rule, yet are they in the way of attaining thereunto. Such as these may (on various occasions) first decay in their profession and duties, and afterward utterly fall from them into the open service of sin and the world.

Thus also it is with churches. At their first planting, they were set in a pure and holy state, as to the doctrine, professed holiness, and worship of the gospel. They were all planted noble vines, wholly of a right seed, however they turn afterward into the degenerate plant of a strange vine. They may lose of this order and beauty, part with truth, decay in holiness, and the faithful city thereby become a harlot. How this hath come to pass, how thereby Christianity hath lost its glory, power, and efficacy in the world, how that blessing which it brought along with it unto the nations, is lost and forfeited, and by what means, shall in some principal instances be declared.

4. Where this holiness is professed, and the power of it evidenced in its fruits, there, and then alone is Christ glorified and honoured in the world. It is true, there are other things that belong unto that revenue of glory which our Lord and King requireth of us. Such are the profession of the truth, and observance of the worship of the gospel. But if these things are disjoined and separate (as they may be) from holy obedience, they no way advance the glory of Christ. But where churches and persons professing the gospel, are changed and renewed into the image of God, where their hearts are purified within, and their lives made fruitful without, where they are universally under the con-

duct of a spirit of peace, love, meekness, benignity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, and are fruitful in good works, in which things and other of an alike nature this holiness doth consist; there do they make a due representation of the gospel and its author in the world; then do they evidence the power, purity, and efficacy of his doctrine and grace, whereby he is glorified. Herein doth he 'see of the travail of his soul and is satisfied;' this is his 'portion and the lot of his inheritance' in this world. But where it is otherwise, where men, where churches are called by his name, and under a profession of his authority, and expectation of mercy and eternal blessedness from him, do come short of this holiness, and walk in paths contrary unto it, there is the holy Son of God 'crucified afresh, and put to open shame.'

These things being premised, way is made for the due consideration of what was before proposed. For whereas there is an open shameful manifest apostacy from the holiness of the gospel, among the most who are called Christians at this day in the world, it is worth our while to inquire a little into the reasons or causes of it, and the means whereby a stop may be put unto it, or at least particular persons may be preserved from the guilt of it, and the judgments wherein it will issue. If any shall think that there is not such an apostacy in the world, but that the face of things in Europe and among ourselves doth make a due representation of the gospel, and that those things which we hear of and see continually amongst the generality of Christians, are the true and genuine effect of the doctrine and principles of our religion; I shall no way contend with them, so as that they will but a little stand out of our way, and not hinder us in our progress.

Now the apostacy that is in the world from gospel holiness or evangelical obedience, is of two kinds: for some fall from it as formally such, and others as to the matter of it. Of the first sort are they who would advance another kind of obedience, a course of another sort of duties, or the same as to the substance of them, but as proceeding from other principles, and carried on by other motives than what it requireth, in the stead thereof. Thus it is with many in the world: they pretend unto a strictness in some duties,

and a multiplication of others, at least unto a great appearance thereof. But it is hard for any one to discover how that which they do, belongeth to evangelical holiness, if its nature depend on evangelical principles and ends. Others fall from it openly and visibly, into a sinful, worldly, flagitious course of life. This is that apostacy which the Christian world groans under at this day, and which, as it is to be feared, will bring the judgments of God upon it. The very profession of piety is much lost, yea, much derided amongst many. Duties of holiness, strictness of conversation, communication unto edification, are not only neglected, but scorned. It is in many places a lost labour to seek for Christianity among Christians; and the degeneracy seems to be increasing every day. It is the latter of these which I principally intend, as that which is of most universal concernment. But the former also, though under many specious pretences, being of no less pernicious event unto many, must not be wholly passed by. I shall therefore first give some instances of men's declensions from the holy ways of gospel obedience, into paths of pretended duties of their own finding out, and add those reasons of their dislike of the good old way, which gives them occasion so to do.

The first and most signal instance of this kind is given us by the Romanists. None boast more than they of holiness, that is, of their church, making its sanctity a note of its truth. But because the wicked and flagitious lives, not only of the body of the people among them, but of many of their chief rulers and guides, is openly manifest; in the defence of their confident claim, as that alone which will give countenance unto it, they betake themselves unto their votaries, or those who dedicate themselves by vow unto more strict exercises in religion, than others attain or are obliged unto. And this sort of people have obtained alone the name and reputation of religious among them. What is their way and manner of life, what the devotion wherein they spend their hours, what the duties they oblige themselves unto in great variety, and the manner wherein they perform them, I shall take for granted, and pass by as generally known. Many have already discovered the vanity, superstition, and hypocrisy of the whole outward course

wherein they are generally engaged, though they neither do, nor ought to judge of the hearts, minds, and state of individuals, unless where by their deeds they manifest themselves. I shall only evince, that what at best they pretend unto (though boasted of not only to be all, but more than God requireth of them), is not that holiness or obedience which is prescribed unto us in the gospel, but somewhat substituted in the room of it, and consequently in opposition unto it. And,

First, It hath not that evidence of spiritual freedom and liberty which gospel holiness in all the duties of it is accompanied withal. The first effect of its truth upon our minds, is, 'to make us free;' John viii. 32. It is the principle of all holiness, and enlargeth the mind and spirit unto it, whence it is called the 'holiness of truth;' Eph. iv. 24. So 'where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty;' 2 Cor. iii. 17. Men are naturally the servants of sin, willingly giving up themselves unto the fulfilling of its lusts and commands, and are free only from righteousness. But where the Holy Spirit worketh with the word of truth, men are made 'free from sin, and become the servants of God, having their fruit unto holiness;' Rom. vi. 20. 22. So it is said of all believers, that they have 'not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father;' Rom. viii. 15. 'Not a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;' 2 Tim. i. 7. The meaning of all these and the like testimonies, is, that God by his grace enlargeth, makes free and ready the hearts of believers unto all gospel obedience, so as that they shall walk in it, and perform all the duties of it willingly, cheerfully, freely, without that fear and dread which is an effect of the power of the law. They are not in a scrupulous bondage unto outward duties and the manner of their performance, but do all things with delight and freedom. They have by the Spirit of adoption as the reverential fear of children, so their gracious inclination unto obedience. But in that exercise of devotion, and multiplied outward duties of religion, which the Romanists boast of as their especial sanctity, there are great evidences of a servile bondage, or slavish frame of spirit. For they are forced to bind themselves, and to be bound unto it by especial vows, in whose

observation they no more act as their own guardians, or as those who are 'sui juris,' but are under the coercive discipline of others, and outward punishment in case of failure. And those who are so servants of men in religious duties are not God's freemen, nor have they Christ for their Lord in that case, who have another. The foundation of all these duties, and which alone obligeth them unto their performance, are vows nowhere required by God or our Lord Christ in the gospel. And the principal regard which any have in their strict attendance unto them, is the obedience which they owe unto the superintendents of those vows. It is easy to apprehend how inconsistent this way is with that spiritual freedom, and liberty of mind which inseparably accompanieth true gospel holiness. Besides, the opinion of merit, which not only goeth along with them, but also animates them in all these services, makes them servile in all they do. For they cannot but know, that every thing in merit must not only be tried by the touchstone of sincerity, but weighed in the balance to the utmost scruple, to find out what it amounts or comes unto. And this is perfectly destructive of that liberty in obedience which the gospel requireth. So also is that tormenting persuasion which they are under the power of, namely, That they have no grounds of confidence or assurance, that either they are accepted with God here, or shall come to the blessed enjoyment of him hereafter. Hence in all duties they must of necessity be acted with a spirit of fear, and not of power and a sound mind.

Secondly, The rule of their duties and obedience, as to what is in their own judgments eminent therein, is not the gospel, but a system of peculiar laws and rules that they have framed for themselves. So some obey the rule of Benedict, some of Francis, some of Dominic, some of Ignatius, and the like. This utterly casts out their whole endeavour from any interest in gospel holiness; for the formal nature of that consists herein, that it is a conformity unto the rule of the gospel as such, or a compliance with the will of God as manifested therein. Hence do they multiply unrequired duties, yea, the principal parts of their devotion and sanctity consist in them which are of their own devising, for which they have no gospel precept or command. And such in

particular are those vows which are the foundation of all that they do. In this case our Saviour, reproving the Pharisees for their additional duties beyond the prescript of the word, shews them how they made 'the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions,' and that 'in vain they worshipped God, teaching the commandments of men;' Matt. xv. 6. 9. And when they were offended at his rejection of one of their new imposed duties, he replies, that 'Every plant which his heavenly Father hath not planted should be rooted up;' ver. 13. So wholly rejecting all those religious duties which they had framed by rules of their own devising. Nor are these of the Roman devotionists of any better constitution; they are plants of men's own planting, and shall be rooted up accordingly and cast into the fire. Let the number of false invented duties of religion be never so great, let the manner of their performance be never so exact or severe, they serve to no other end, but to divert the minds of men from the obedience which the gospel requireth.

Thirdly, There is nothing in all that is prescribed by the masters of this devotion, or practised by the disciples, but it may all be done and observed without either faith in Christ, or a sense of his love unto our souls. The obedience of the gospel is the obedience of faith; on that and no other root will it grow; and the principal motive unto it is the love of Christ, which constraineth unto it. But what is there in all their prescriptions that these things are necessary unto? May not men rise at midnight to repeat a number of prayers, or go barefoot, or wear sackcloth, or abstain from flesh at certain times or always, submit to discipline from themselves or others, and (if they have bodily strength to enable them), undergo all the horrid, and indeed ridiculous, hardships of standing on a pillar continually, or bearing great logs of wood on their shoulders all the day long, that are told or fabled of the Egyptian monks, without the least dram of saving faith or love? All false religions have ever had some amongst them who have had an ambition to amuse others with these self-afflictions and macerations, wherein the devotions among the Bannians do exceed at this day whatever the Romanists pretend unto.

Fourthly, The whole of what they do, is so vitiated and

corrupted with the proud opinion of merit and supererogation, as renders it utterly foreign unto the gospel. It is not my present business to dispute against those opinions. It hath been already abundantly manifested (and may be yet so again where it is necessary), that they wholly enervate the covenant of grace, are injurious to the blood and mediation of Christ, and are utterly inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the gospel. Whereas, therefore, these proud imaginations do animate their whole course of duties, the gospel is not concerned in what they do.

And we may add unto what hath been remarked already, the consideration of that gross superstition, yea, and idolatry, which they give up themselves unto, almost in most of their devotions. This is not the least of their transgressions in these things, but is sufficient to violate all they do besides. Wherefore, notwithstanding their pretence unto sanctity, and a more strict attendance unto duties of obedience than other men; yet it is manifest, that the best of them are under a defection from the holiness of the gospel, substituting an obedience unto their own imaginations in the room thereof.

Again, Others confine the whole of their obedience unto morality, and deride whatever is pleaded as above it and beyond it under the name of evangelical grace, as enthusiastical folly. And the truth is, if those persons who plead for the necessity of gospel grace and holiness, which is more than so, do understand each other, and that somewhat of the same things are not intended by them under different expressions and divers methods of their management, they are not of the same religion. But if they mistake the meaning of each other, and differ only in the manner of teaching the same truth, I suppose they steer the safest course and freest from just offence, who follow and comply with the manner wherein the things intended are taught in the Scripture, rather than those who accommodate their discourses unto the phraseology of heathen philosophers. But the truth is, the difference seems to be real, and the principles men proceed upon in these things are contradictory to each other. For some do plainly affirm, that the whole of gospel obedience consists in the observance of moral virtue, which they so describe as to render it ex-

clusive of evangelical grace. This others judge to contain an open declension from, and waving of gospel holiness. It is granted freely, that the performance of all moral duties evangelically, that is, in the power of the grace of Christ, unto the glory of God by him, is an essential part of gospel obedience. And whoever they are who (under the pretence of grace, or any thing else) do neglect the improvement of moral virtues, or the observance of the duties of morality, they are so far disobedient unto the gospel and the law thereof. And some men do not understand how contemptible they render themselves in the management of their cause, when they charge others with an opposition unto morality, or moral virtue, and setting up they know not what imaginary holiness in the room thereof. For those whom they so calumniate, are not only immediately discharged from any sense of guilt herein, by the testimony of their own consciences, but all other men, so far as the rule of ingenuity is extended, do from the knowledge of their doctrine, and observation of their practice, avouch their innocence.

But is it not so then, that men do condemn morality as that which is not to be trusted unto, but will deceive them that rest in or upon it? I answer, they do so, when it is made (as it is by some) the whole of religion, and as it is obtruded into the place of evangelical grace and holiness by others. They take moral virtue (as it always was taken, until of late) for natural honesty, or such a conformity of life unto the light of nature, as to be useful and approved among men. But this may be; men may do what is morally good, and yet never do any thing that is accepted with God. For they may do it, but not for the love of God above all, but for the love of self. And therefore they charge morality with an insufficiency unto the ends of religion, or the saving of the souls of men.

1. Where nothing is intended by it, but that whereof the rule and measure is the light of nature; for that doth direct unto every duty that is properly moral. And what it doth not direct unto, what is not naturally by the law of our creation obligatory unto all mankind, cannot be called moral. Now to confine all religion as to the preceptive and obediential part of it, unto the light of nature, is to evacuate one half of the gospel.

2. Where it is in practice an effect of conviction only, and performed in the innate strength of the rational faculties of our souls, without the especial supernatural aid of the Spirit and grace of God. Whatever name any thing may be called by that is not wrought in us by the grace of God, as well as by us in a way of duty, is foreign unto evangelical obedience. And those who reject morality as insufficient unto acceptation with God and eternal salvation, intend only what is of that kind performed in the powers of our natural faculties externally excited and directed, without any supernatural influence or operation of especial grace. And indeed so to place a confidence in such duties is open Pelagianism.

3. Where it proceedeth not from the spiritual supernatural renovation of our souls. The rule and method of the gospel is, that the tree be first made good, and then the fruit will be so also. Unless a person be first regenerate, and his nature therein is renewed unto the image and likeness of God, unless he be endued with a new principle of spiritual life from above, enabling him to live unto God, he can do nothing of whatsoever sort it be, that is absolutely acceptable unto God. And it is especially under this consideration, that any reject morality, as not comprehensive of gospel obedience; yea, as that which is apt to draw off the mind from it, and which will deceive them that trust to it; namely, that it proceedeth not from the principle of grace in a renewed soul. For whatever doth so, though it may be originally of a moral nature in itself, yet from the manner of its performance it becomes gracious and evangelical. And we need not fear to exclude the best works of unrenewed persons from being any part of gospel holiness or obedience.

4. Where those in whom it is, or who pretend unto it, are really destitute of the internal light of saving grace, enabling them to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, and to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. That there is such a saving light wrought in the minds of believers by the Holy Ghost, that without it men cannot discern spiritual things, so as to favour, like, and approve of them, hath been elsewhere at large demonstrated. But this belongs not unto the morality contended about. It is not only independent on it, but is indeed set up in competition with it,

and opposition unto it. No man need fear to judge and censure that morality as unto its interest in gospel obedience, and sufficiency unto the salvation of the souls of men, which may be obtained, practised and lived up unto, where God doth not 'shine into the hearts of men to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ;' where no work of spiritual illumination hath been in their minds, enabling them to discern and know the mind of God, which none knoweth originally 'but the Spirit of God, by whom they are made unto us;' 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12. Yet this is that which some men seem to take up withal, and rest in, unto the rejection of evangelical obedience.

Lastly, The same censure is to be passed on it, wherever it is separable from those fundamental gospel graces, which both in their natures, acts, and objects are purely supernatural, having no principle, rule, or measure, but truth supernaturally revealed. Such, in particular, is the whole regard we have unto the mediation of Christ, as also the dispensation of the Spirit promised to abide with the church for ever as its comforter, with all the duties of obedience which depend thereon. He is ignorant of the gospel, that knows not that in these things do lie the fundamental principles of its doctrine and precepts, and that in the exercise of those graces in a way of duty which immediately concerns them, consist the principal parts of the life of God, or of that obedience unto him by Jesus Christ, which is indispensably required of all that shall be saved. Whereas, therefore, these things cannot be esteemed merely moral virtues, nor do at all belong unto, but are considered as separate from, all that morality which is judged insufficient unto life and salvation, it is evident that it is not in the least dealt withal too severely, nor censured more harshly than it doth deserve. If, therefore, any betake themselves hereunto as to the whole of their duty, it comes under the account of that partial defection from the gospel which we inquire into.

Some there are who, as unto themselves, pretend they have attained unto perfection already in this world; such a perfection in all degrees of holiness as the gospel is but an introduction towards. But this proud imagination, destructive of the covenant of grace, of all use of the mediation and blood of Christ, contrary to innumerable testimonies of

Scripture, and the experience of all that do believe, and concerning which their own consciences do reprove the pretenders unto it, needs not detain us in its examination. It is sufficient unto our present design to have given these instances, how men may, in a pretended conscientious discharge of many duties of obedience, yet fall off and decline from that which the gospel requireth. The occasions and reasons hereof (supposing those more general before considered with respect unto the truth of the gospel, which all of them take place here, and have their influence upon their dislike of its holiness) may be briefly inquired into, and represented. Nor shall we confine ourselves unto the instances given, but take in the consideration of every declension from it, which on any account befalls them who, having had a conviction of its necessity, yet refuse to come unto its universal practice. And to this end we may observe,

First, That the holiness which the gospel requireth, will not be kept up nor maintained either in the hearts or lives of men, without a continual conflict, warring, contending; and that with all care, diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance therein. It is our warfare, and the Scripture abounds in the discovery of the adversaries we have to conflict withal, their power and subtlety, as also in directions and encouragements unto their resistance. To suppose that gospel obedience will be maintained in our hearts and lives without a continual management of a vigorous warfare against its enemies, is to deny the Scripture and the experience of all that do believe and obey God in sincerity. Satan, sin, and the world, are continually assaulting of it, and seeking to ruin its interest in us. The devil will not be resisted, which it is our duty to do, 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. without a sharp contest and conflict; in the management whereof, we are commanded to 'take unto ourselves the whole armour of God;' Eph. vi. 12. Fleshly lusts do continually war against our souls, 1 Pet. ii. 11. and if we maintain not a warfare unto the end against them, they will be our ruin. Nor will the power of the world be any otherwise avoided than by a victory over it, 1 John v. 4. which will not be carried without contending. But I suppose it needs no great confirmation unto any who know what it is to serve and obey God in

temptations, that the life of faith and race of holiness will not be preserved nor continued in, without a severe striving, labouring, contending, warring, with diligence, watchfulness, and perseverance; so that I shall at present take it as a principle (notionally at least) agreed upon by the generality of Christians. If we like not to be holy on these terms, we must let it alone, for on any other we shall never be so. If we faint in this course, if we give it over, if we think what we aim at herein not to be worth the obtaining or preserving by such a severe contention all our days, we must be content to be without it. Nothing doth so promote the interest of hell and destruction in the world, as a presumption that a lazy slothful performance of some duties, and abstinence from some sins, is that which God will accept of as our obedience. Crucifying of sin, mortifying our inordinate affections, contesting against the whole interest of the flesh, Satan, and the world, and that in inward actings of grace, and all instances of outward duties, and that always while we live in this world, are required of us hereunto.

Here lies the first spring of the apostacy of many in the world, of them especially who betake themselves unto, and take up satisfaction in, another way of duties than what the gospel requireth. They had (it is possible) by their light and convictions made so near approaches unto it, as to see what an incessant travail of soul is required unto its attainment and preservation.

They are like the Israelites travelling in the wilderness towards the land of Canaan. When they came near unto the borders and entrance of it, they sent some to spy it out, that they might know the nature and state of the land and country whither they were going. These, for their encouragement, and to evince the fruitfulness of the earth, bring unto them 'a branch with one cluster of grapes,' so great and fair, that they 'bare it between two on a staff, and they brought also pomegranates and figs;' Numb. xiii. 23. But withal, they told them of the hideous difficulties they were to conflict withal, in that the people were strong, their cities walled, and the Anakims dwelling amongst them; ver. 28. This utterly disheartens the carnal people, and notwithstand-

ing the prospect they had of the 'land that flowed with milk and honey,' back again they go into the wilderness, and there they perish.

So it is with these persons; notwithstanding the near approach they have made by light and convictions unto the kingdom of God, (as our Saviour told the young man who was as one of them, Mark xii. 34.) and the prospect they have of the beauty of holiness, yet turn off from it again, and perish in the wilderness. For upon the view they have of the difficulties which lie in the conflict mentioned, they fall under many disadvantages which at length utterly divert them from its pursuit. As,

1. Weariness of the flesh, not enduring to comply with that constant course of duties continually returning upon it, which is required thereunto. Various pleas will be made for an exemption from them, at least in some troublesome instances. And the carnal mind will not want pretences to countenance the flesh in its weariness. Hereon, one duty after another is first omitted and then utterly foregone; neglect of a vigorous constancy in subduing the body, and bringing of it into subjection, commended by the apostle in his own example, 1 Cor. ix. 27. is with many the beginning of this kind of apostacy. These things, I say, will oft-times fall out, that through the weariness and aversation of the flesh, countenanced by various pretences of the carnal mind, sundry duties will be omitted. But this is the faith and trial of the saints, here is the difference between sound believers and those who are acted only by convictions. Those of the first sort will sooner or later (for the most part speedily) be humbled for such omissions, and recover their former diligence according to the prayer of the psalmist, Psal. cxix. 176. But where this ground is won by the flesh, and men grow satisfied under the loss of any duty, it is an evidence of an hypocritical backsliding heart.

2. When men are come unto the height of their convictions, and proceed no farther, indwelling sin, with its lusts and corrupt affections (which have for awhile been checked and mated by light) will insensibly prevail, and weary the mind with solicitations for the exercise of its old dominion. For the spring of it being not dried, the bitter root of it being not digged up nor withered, it will not cease until it

hath broke down all the bounds that were fixed unto it, and bear down convictions with force and violence.

3. Ignorance of the true way of making application unto the Lord Christ for grace and supplies of the Spirit, to bring them unto, or preserve them in, a state of gospel holiness, is of the same importance. Without this, to dream of being holy according unto the mind of God, is to renounce the gospel. We need not look farther for men's apostacy than this, if they are satisfied with such a holiness, such an obedience, as is not derived unto us by the grace of Christ, nor wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ, nor preserved in us by the power of Christ. The way hereof such persons are always ignorant of, and at length do openly despise. Yet may men as well see without the sun or light, or breathe without the air, or live without natural spirits, as engage into or abide in the practice of gospel holiness, without continual applications unto Christ, the fountain of all grace, for spiritual strength enabling thereunto. The way and means hereof these persons being ignorant of, and unacquainted withal, the holiness which the gospel requireth becomes unto them a thing strange and burdensome, which therefore they desert and refuse. If therefore it be true, that 'without Christ we can do nothing;' that in our life unto God, he liveth in us, and efficiently is our life; if from him (as the head) nourishment is supplied unto every living member of the body; if the life which we lead 'be by the faith of the Son of God,' and the only way of deriving these things; and all supplies of spiritual strength from him, be by the exercise of faith in him; it follows unavoidably that all those who are unacquainted with this way, who know not how to make their application unto him for this end and purpose, can never persevere in a pursuit of gospel holiness. So hath it fallen out and no otherwise with them concerning whom we speak; as ignorance of the righteousness of God, or of Christ's being 'the end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe,' is the reason why men 'go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God;' so ignorance of the grace which is continually to be received from Christ in a way of believing, that we may be holy with gospel holiness, is the reason why so many turn off from it, unto another kind of holiness of their own fram-

ing, which yet is not another, because it is none at all. But many are so far from endeavouring after, or abiding in, gospel holiness, on this foundation of continual supplies of grace from Jesus Christ to that end, as that they avowedly despise all holiness and obedience springing from that fountain, or growing on that root; in which case God will judge. In the mean time, I say (and the matter is evident), that one principal reason why men turn off from it upon the prospect of the difficulties that attend it, and the oppositions that are made unto it, is their unbelief, and ignorance in the way of making application unto Christ by faith, for supplies of spiritual strength and grace.

4. Unacquaintedness with the true nature of evangelical repentance, is another cause hereof. This is that grace, which comfortably carrieth the souls of believers through all their failings, infirmities, and sins. Nor are they able to live to God one day, without the constant exercise of it. They find it as necessary unto the continuance of spiritual life, as faith itself. It is not only a means of our entrance into, but it belongs essentially unto, our gospel state, and our continuance therein. Hereunto belongs that continual humble self-abasement, from a sense of the majesty and holiness of God, with the disproportion of the best of our duties unto his will, which believers live and walk in continually; and he that is not sensible of a gracious sweetness and usefulness therein, knows not what it is to walk with God. Hereby doth God administer several encouragements unto our souls, to abide in our way of obedience; notwithstanding the many discouragements and despondencies we meet withal. In brief, take it away, and you overthow faith, and hope, and all other graces. Those therefore who are unacquainted with the nature and use of this grace and duty, who can taste no spiritual refreshment in all its sorrows, who know nothing of it but legal troubles, anguish, fear, and distractions, will not endure the thoughts of living in the practice of it all their days, which yet is as necessary unto gospel holiness as faith itself. Men, I say, falling into this condition, finding all these difficulties to conflict withal, and lying under these disadvantages, if any thing will offer itself in the room of this costly holiness, they will readily embrace it. Hence, as some betake themselves unto a pretence of morality

(which as unto many is a mere pretence, and made use of only to countenance themselves in a neglect of the whole of that obedience which the gospel openly requireth), so others do, under other expressions, retreat unto the mere duties of their own light, and those as only required therein, with some peculiar reliefs unto the flesh, in what is burdensome unto it. As for instance; There is nothing that the flesh more riseth up in a dislike of, and opposition unto, than constancy in the duty of prayer, in private, in families, on all occasions; especially if attended unto in a spiritual manner as the gospel doth require. But in itself, and as to the substance of it, it is a duty which the light of nature exacteth of us. But whereas this may prove burdensome to the flesh, a relief is borrowed from a pretence of gospel light and liberty, that men need not pray at any time, unless their own spirits or light do previously require it of them; which is to turn the grace of God into an occasion of sinning. By this means some have gotten a holiness, wherein for the most part it seems indifferent to them whether they pray at any time or no. And other instances of the like kind might be given. Upon the whole matter, to free themselves from this state, so uneasy to flesh and blood, so contrary unto all the imaginations of the carnal mind, some men have betaken themselves unto another, wherein they have (or pretend to have) no conflict against sin, nor to need any application unto the Lord Christ, for supplies of spiritual strength, which belongs not unto that holiness which the gospel requires, and which God accepts.

It may be said, that in some of the instances before given, especially in that of the papacy, there is an appearance of a greater conflict with, and more hardships put on the flesh, than in any other way of obedience that is pleaded for. And there is indeed such an appearance, but it is no more. The oppositions that arise against their austerities, are from without, or from nature as it is weak, but not as it is carnal. It is possible that sin may not be concerned in what they do, neither in its power nor reign; yea, so far as it is leavened by superstition, it acts itself therein no less than it doth in others, by fleshly lusts. But it is an internal, spiritual, immediate opposition unto its being and all its actings, that it riseth up with such rage against, as to weary those who have

not that loving principle of faith, whereto the victory over it doth peculiarly appertain.

Secondly, This evangelical holiness will not allow of, nor will consist with, the constant habitual omission of any one duty, or the satisfaction of any one lust of the mind or of the flesh. As we are in all instances of duty to be 'perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord,' 2 Cor. vii. 1. so 'no provision is to be made for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;' Rom. xiii. 14. This is that which loseth it so many friends in the world. Would it barter with the flesh, would it give and take allowances in any kind, or grant indulgence unto any one sin, multitudes would have a kindness for it, which now bid it defiance. Every one would have an exemption for that sin which he likes best, and which is most suited to his inclinations and carnal interests. And this would be virtually a dispensation for all unholiness whatever. But these are the terms of the gospel; no one duty is to be neglected, no one sin is to be indulged, and they are looked upon as intolerable. Naaman would not give up himself unto the worship of the God of Israel, but with this reserve, that he might also bow in the house of Rimmon, whereon his power and preferment did depend. Many things the young man in the gospel boasted himself to have done, and was (doubtless) willing to continue in the performance of them; but yet, through his whole course, the love of the world had the prevalency in him, and when he was tried in that instance, rather than relinquish it, he gave up the whole. But this is the law of the gospel: although it provide a merciful relief against those daily sins which we are overtaken withal, by our frailty and weakness, or surprised into by the power of temptations, against the bent of our minds, and habitual inclination of our wills, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. yet it alloweth not the cherishing or practice of any one sin, internal or external, whatever. An habitual course in any sin is utterly inconsistent with evangelical obedience, 1 John iii. 6—9. yea, it requireth indispensably, that we be engaged in our minds and wills in an opposition unto all sin, and a constant endeavour after its not being in us, either in the root or in the fruit thereof. It will not connive at, or comply with, any inordinate affection, any habitual sinful distemper, nor the first motions of sin

that are in the flesh. This is that perfection which is required in the new covenant, Gen. xvii. 1. that sincerity, integrity, freedom from guile, 'walking after the Spirit, and not after the flesh,' and 'newness of life,' which the gospel everywhere prescribeth unto us. On no other terms but universality in obedience and opposition unto sin, will it approve of us; 1 John iii. 8, 9.

And this occasioneth the turning aside of many from the pursuit of an endeavour to be holy, according unto the rule of the gospel. When by light and convictions, they come to take a view of what is required thereunto, it disliketh them, they cannot bear it; and therefore, either at once or gradually, give over all ways of pursuing their first design. And men break with the gospel on this account, by the means ensuing.

1. They cannot make the same judgment of sin that the gospel doth, nor will judge all those things to be sin and evil which the gospel declares so to be. Yea, we have some come unto that pharisaism, that they scarce think any thing to be sinful, or worth taking notice of, unless it be openly flagitious. Under this darkness and ignorance, all sorts of filthy noisome lusts may be cherished in the hearts of men, keeping them at as great and real a distance from the holiness of truth, as the most outrageous outward sins can do. And this neglect or refusal to comply with the rule of the gospel before laid down, is grounded in and promoted by two occasions.

(1.) They have a willing insensibility of the guilt of some unmortified lust; this they will abide in and cherish. For their minds being habituated unto it, they find no great evil in it, nor do see any cogent reason why they should forego it. So was it with the young man, with respect unto the love of the world. He was sorry that he could not be evangelically obedient, whilst he retained it; but seeing that would not be, he did not discern any such evil in, nor was sensible of any such guilt from it, nor could apprehend any such equality in, or necessity of, gospel holiness, that he should renounce the one, for the embracing the other. So will it be when any lust is made familiar unto the mind; it will not be terrified with it, nor can see any great danger in it. It is between such a soul and sin, as it is between the

devil and the witch, or one that hath a familiar spirit, as we render the Hebrew 'ob' and 'jideoni.' At the first appearance of the devil, be it in what shape it will, it cannot but bring a tremour and fear on human nature; but after awhile he becomes a familiar, and when alone he is to be feared, he is not feared at all. The poor deceived wretch then thinks him in his power, so that he can use or command him as he sees good; whereas he himself is absolutely in the power of the devil. Men may be startled with sin in its first appearance, on their first convictions, or its first dangerous efforts; but when it is become their familiar, they suppose it a thing in their own power, which they can use or not use as they see occasion; though indeed themselves are the servants of corruption, being overcome thereby and brought into bondage. Hence it is inconceivable how little sense of guilt in some sins men find, after they are habituated unto them. In some sins, I say, for with respect unto sins absolutely against the light of nature, conscience will not easily be bribed not to condemn them. It will not in such cases be speechless, until it be seared and made senseless. But there are sins not accompanied with so great an evidence, yet attended with no less guilt than those which directly militate against the light of nature. In this case, when the word of the gospel comes, as it is 'living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, as a discoverer and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' when it comes and discovers the secret frames, figments, imaginations, inclinations of the mind, and condemneth what is in the least measure or manner irregular; when it will not be put off, nor accept of any composition or compensation by the most strict and rigid profession in other things; men are ready to withdraw themselves to the rule of their own light and reason, which they find more gentle and tractable.

(2.) A dereliction of the gospel on this account, with respect unto the inwardness, spirituality, and extent of its commands, is much increased under the influence of corrupt opinions. And of this nature are all those which tend unto the extenuation of sin. For some there are who suppose that there is not such a provoking guilt, such a spiritual outrage in sin, as others pretend. Hence multitudes, as

they judge, are needlessly troubled and perplexed about it. A generous mind, free from superstitious fears, and dark conceits imbibed in education, will deliver the mind of man from the trouble of such apprehensions. A great sense of the guilt of small sins, is an engine to promote the interest of preachers, and those who pretend to the conduct of conscience. The filth and pollution of sin is a metaphor which few can understand, and none ought to be concerned in. That the power of the remainder of indwelling sin is a foolish notion; and that the disorderly frames of the heart, and the mind, through darkness, deadness, spiritual indisposition, or other secret irregularities, are fancies, not sins, which we need not be troubled at ourselves, nor make any acknowledgment of unto God. These and the like opinions are the pharisaical corban of our age, corrupting the whole law of our obedience. And it were easy to manifest how perilous and ruinous they are unto the souls of men; what powerful instruments in the hand of Satan, to eclipse the glory of the grace of Christ on the one hand, and to promote apostacy from holiness in the hearts and lives of men on the other. I shall only say, set the corrupt heart of men by any means at liberty, from an awe and reverence of the holiness of God and his law, with respect unto the inward actings and frames of the soul, with a sense of guilt where they are irregular, and a necessity of constant humiliation before God thereon, and an equally constant application of itself unto the Lord Christ for grace and mercy, and it is wholly in vain to think of fixing any bounds unto the progress of sin. The ignorance hereof is that which hath produced in some the proud imagination of perfection, where they are far enough from bringing their consciences and lives to the rule of the gospel, but only aggravate their guilt by attempting to bend that inflexible rule unto their own perverse and crooked minds.

2. In this case, carnal interest, which takes in and compriseth all the circumstances of men, calls for an indulgence unto some one sin or other, which the gospel will not admit of. Pride and ambition, covetousness or love of this present evil world, and the perishing things of it, uncleanness or sensuality in eating, drinking; self-exaltation and boasting, vain-glory, idleness, one or other must be

spared. One thing, I say, or other on the account of carnal interest, either because small, or useful, or general, or suited unto a natural temper, or as is supposed made necessary by the occasions of life, must be reserved. Where this resolution prevails, as men are absolutely excluded from any real interest in gospel holiness, which will admit of no such reserves, so it will not fail to lead them into open apostacy of one kind or other. For,

(1.) Such persons are unapproved of God in all that they do, and so have no ground for expectation of his blessing or assistance. For the allowance of the least sin, is such an impeachment of sincerity, as casteth a man out of the covenant communion with God. This is that offending in one point which ruins a man's obedience, and renders him guilty against the 'whole law;' James ii. 10. Any one actual sin makes a man guilty of the curse of the whole law as it contains the covenant of works; and the willing allowance of a man's self in any one sin habitually, breaks the whole law as it contains the rule of our obedience in the covenant of grace. And if in this disapproved condition men meet with outward prosperity in the world, their danger will be increased, as well as their guilt aggravated. And the utmost care of professors is required in this matter. For there seems to be among many an open indulgence unto habitual disorders, which hazards their whole covenant interest, and must fill them with uncertainty in their own minds. High time it is for all such persons to shake off 'every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset them, and to run with redoubled diligence' the remainder of 'the race that is set before them.'

(2.) This indulgence unto any one sin will make way in the minds, consciences, and affections of men for the admission of other sins also: it will be like a thief that is hidden in a house, and only waits an opportunity to open the doors unto his other companions; to this end he watcheth for a season of sleep and darkness, when there is none to observe his actings. Let a person who thus alloweth himself to live in any sin, fall into temptation whilst he is a little more than ordinary careless, his allowed corruption shall open his heart unto any other sin that offers for admission. 'Look not,' saith the wise man, 'upon the wine when it is

ed, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things;' Prov. xxiii. 31. 33. One sin liked and loved, will make way for any other. There is a kindred and alliance between sins of all sorts, and they agree in the same end and design. Where any one is willingly entertained, others will intrude themselves beyond all our power of resistance.

(3.) It will divert the soul from the use of those means whereby all other sins should be resisted, and thereby apostacy be prevented. For there is no means appointed or sanctified by God for the resistance or mortification of sin, but it opposeth sin as sin, and consequently every thing that is so, and that because it is so. Wherefore, whoever willingly reserves any one sin from the efficacy of the means God hath appointed for its mortification, doth equally reserve all. And as those means do lose their power and efficacy towards such persons, so they will insensibly fall off from a conscientious attendance unto any of those ways and duties whereby sin should be opposed and ruined.

Thirdly, Many of the graces in whose exercise this evangelical holiness doth principally consist, are such as are of no reputation in the world. The greatest moralists that ever were, whether Pharisees or philosophers, could never separate between their love and practice of virtue on the one hand, and their own honour, glory, and reputation on the other. There was in them, as the poet expresseth it in one instance,

—Amor patriæ, laudumque immensa cupido.

Hence they always esteemed those virtues the most excellent which had the best acceptation and the greatest vogue of praise among men. And it seems to be ingrafted in the nature of man, to have some kind of desire to be approved in what men judge themselves to do well and laudably. Neither is this desire so evil in itself, but that it may be managed in subordination unto the glory of God, which nothing that is absolutely evil or in its own nature, or any considerations or circumstances can be. But when at any time it swells into an excess, and the pharisaical leaven of 'being seen and praised of men,' puffeth it up, it is the worst poison that the mind can be infected withal. In what degree

soever it be admitted, in the same it alienates the mind from gospel holiness. And it doth so effectually, I mean this self-love, and love of the praise of others doth so, on the reason mentioned, namely, that the graces in whose exercise it doth principally consist, are of no reputation in the world. Such are meekness, gentleness, self-denial, poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mercy and compassion, purity of heart, openness and simplicity of spirit, readiness to undergo and forgive injuries, zeal for God, contempt of the world, fear of sin, dread of God's judgment for sin; and the like. These are those adornings of the inner man of the heart which with God are of great price. But as unto their reputation in the world, weakness, softness of nature, superstitious folly, madness, hypocritical preciseness, is the best measure they meet withal. When men begin to discern, that as unto this holiness of the gospel, its principal work lies within doors, in the heart and mind, in the things that no mortal eye seeth, and few commend so much as in the notion of them, and which in their outward exercise meet with no good entertainment in the world, they betake themselves unto and rest in those duties which make a better appearance, and meet with better acceptance. And many of them are such as in their proper place are diligently to be attended unto, provided they draw not off the mind from an attendance unto those despised graces and their exercise, wherein the life of true holiness doth consist. And it is well if we are all sufficiently aware of the deceits of Satan in this matter. In the beginnings of the general apostacy from the power and purity of Christian religion, to countenance all sorts of persons in a neglect of the principal graces of the gospel, the necessity of regeneration, and a heavenly principle of spiritual life, they were put wholly on outward splendid works of piety and charity, as they were esteemed. Let their minds be defiled, their lusts unmortified, their hearts unhumbled, their whole souls unfurnished of spiritual and heavenly graces, yet (as they would have it) these outward works should assuredly bring them all unto a blessed immortality and glory. But this face of the covering, this veil that was spread over many nations, being now in many places (particularly among us) rent and destroyed, both wis-

dom and much circumspection are required, that neither under a pretence, nor under a real endeavour after the inward spiritual graces of Christ and their due exercise, we do not countenance ourselves in the neglect of those outward duties which are any way useful unto the glory of God, and the good of mankind. These are some of the causes, and other there are of an alike nature, from the powerful influence whereof upon their minds, men have changed gospel holiness for other ways of obedience, which also they give other names unto.

CHAP. IX.

Apostacy into profaneness and sensuality of life; the causes and occasions of it. Defects in public teachers and guides in religion.

THAT which yet remaineth to be considered under this head of backsliding from the commands of the gospel, and the obedience required in them, is of a worse kind, and of a more pernicious consequence. And this is that open apostacy into profaneness and sensuality of life, which the generality of them who are called Christians are in most places of the world visibly fallen into. If any be otherwise minded, if they suppose and judge that the ways and walkings of the generality of churches and individual Christians, of whole nations that profess themselves to be so, are such as the gospel requireth and approveth of, they seem either to be ignorant of the true state of these things in the world, or to be highly injurious unto the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. To suppose that he by his gospel giveth countenance unto, or conniveth at, that darkness, profaneness, sensuality, those bloody contentions and oppressions; in a word, all those filthy and noxious lusts which at this day have overwhelmed the Christian world, doth what he can to render and represent it not only useless, but extremely pernicious unto mankind. For they do say therein, that by him and his doctrine countenance is given unto that degeneracy in wickedness, which heathenism would not allow, whereby the world is filled with confusion, and in danger to be precipitated into ruin. I shall therefore at pre-

sent take it for granted (with the highest readiness to give up that concession when any tolerable evidence shall be given to the contrary), that there is among and in the churches whereunto the generality of Christians do reckon themselves to belong, a visible apostacy from that piety, holiness and righteousness, which the gospel indispensably requireth in all the disciples of Christ, and which the primitive Christians did earnestly follow and eminently abound in. An inquiry into the means and causes hereof, is that which now lies before us. And that especial instance which I shall always regard, is the church of Rome, which as it hath given the most eminent example of apostacy in this kind of any church in the world; so whatever of the same nature befalleth others, it is sufficiently represented therein.

The immediate internal causes (which are, as the rise and original of all sins, so of those wherein this apostacy doth consist, because they are not peculiar hereunto, but equally respect all sins at all times), belong not unto our present inquiry. By these causes I intend in general the depravation of nature, the power and deceitfulness of sin, love of the world, the profits, honours, and pleasures of it, the rage of the flesh after the satisfaction of its sensual lusts, with the aversation of the minds of men from things spiritual and heavenly, as being 'alienated from the life of God,' through the darkness and ignorance that is in them. For these and the like depraved affections being excited and acted by the crafty influences of Satan, and inflamed with temptations, do incline, induce, and carry men into all manner of wickedness with 'delight and greediness;' Jam. i. 14, 15. But whereas all these things in general respect equally all times, occasions, and sins, and whereas it is the constant work of the ministers of the gospel (those I mean, who understand their employment, with the account they must give of the souls committed unto their charge) to discover the nature, detect the deceit, and warn men of the danger of these principles and occasions of sin within them and without them; I shall not need particularly here to insist upon them. It is the more public external means and causes which have produced, furthered, and promoted the apostacy complained of, that we shall take under consideration.

The first occasion hereof in all ages hath been given by, or taken from, the public teachers, guides, or leaders of the people in the matter of religion. I intend them of all sorts, however called, styled, or distinguished, into what forms or orders soever they are cast by themselves or others. And I name them so at large, because it is known how variously they are multiplied, especially in the church of Rome, where (as to these parts of the world) this apostacy began, and by which it is principally promoted, and that by all sorts of them. These at all times have and must have an especial influence into the holiness or unholiness of the people; yea, the purity or apostacy of the church, as to outward means, doth principally depend upon them, with the discharge of their office and duty. In many things they succeed into the room of the priests of old, and frequently fall under the command and rebuke given unto them; Mal. ii. 1—9. 'O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.'

That holy, humble, laborious ministry, which Christ first instituted in the church, was the great means of converting

men unto evangelical obedience, and the preserving of them, therein. This their doctrine, their spirit, their example, their manner and course of life, their prayers, preaching and entire endeavour tended unto, and were blessed and prospered of God unto that purpose; then were the lives of Christians a transcript of the truth of the gospel. But through the degeneracy of the following ages, those who succeeded them became troubled fountains, polluting and corrupting all the streams of Christian religion. It is no uneasy thing to observe, in the course of ecclesiastical records and stories, how by various degrees the leaders of the church became corrupt, and did corrupt the people; giving them in themselves an example of strifes, divisions, ambition, worldly-mindedness; and by their negligence in discharge of their duty, depriving them of the means of being made better by the power of the doctrine and commands of the gospel. Under the Old Testament, the priests and prophets led the people into a double apostacy. First into that of superstition, and idolatry; Jer. xxiii. 15. And this continued prevailing among them, until their sin issued in a desolating calamity. This was the Babylonish captivity, wherein all their idols were buried in the land of Shinar; Zech. v. 11. After the return of the people from thence, when they would no more be inveigled into idolatry, whereof God designed that captivity for an effectual cure, the same sort of persons by negligence, ignorance, and their evil example in profaneness, turned them off from God and his law. This was begun in the days of Malachi, the last of the prophets, and ended in the total apostacy and destruction of that church and people. And when the whole came unto its last issue, in the rejection of the Lord Christ, the Son of God, the same sort of persons, even the guides and teachers, led and even forced the body of the people, into that great rebellion and impenitency therein, as is evidently declared in the gospel. And it is to be feared, that something of the like nature hath fallen out among Christians also: the first apostacy the Christian world fell into, was by superstition and idolatry, principally under the conduct of the church of Rome. And this, as it will always be, was accompanied with wickedness of life in all sorts of persons. Many churches and nations being delivered from this abomination, it is well if,

by the same means, they are not falling into that of a worldly, sensual, profane conversation.

The Scripture is so full on this subject, and the nature of the thing itself is such, as seems to require a deep and thorough consideration of it. But the nature of my design will not admit of enlargements on any particular head, for I intend only to point at the chief springs and occasions of this evil; and accordingly this part of our subject must be only briefly (as that preceding) treated on.

What was before asserted in general, namely, That the well-being of the church depends on the right discharge of the office of the ministry, will, I suppose, be acknowledged by all; and it is plainly declared by the apostle, Ephes. iv. 12—15. In proportion thereunto it will thrive or decay. The nature of this office, the ends of its institution, the works and duties of it, with the universal experience of all ages and places, do evince this observation beyond all contradiction. If therefore those who undertake the exercise of this office, do eminently and notoriously fail in the performance and discharge of the duties thereof, especially if they do so generally, and in any long succession of time, it cannot be but that the people will be corrupt, and degenerate from the rule of the gospel. The flocks will not be preserved, where the shepherds are negligent; and fields will be overrun with weeds, thorns, and briers, if they be not duly tilled. I shall therefore, in the first place, call over some of those things, which are indispensably required in and of the ministers and teachers of the church, that it may be preserved in its purity, and kept up unto its duty in evangelical obedience. And I shall insist only on those, which all men will acknowledge to be such duties, or which none who own the gospel can or dare deny so to be.

First, It is required of them that they keep pure and uncorrupted the doctrine of the gospel, epecially that concerning the holiness enjoined in it, both as to its nature, causes, motives, and ends. So of old, the priest's lips were to preserve knowledge, and the people were to seek the law at his mouth. This was one main end for which the Lord Christ gave unto, and instituted the office of the ministry in the church. Ephes. iv. 11—15. 'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pas-

tors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' The preservation of the truth, the declaration, vindication, and defence of it, so as the members of the church, the disciples of Christ committed to their charge, be neither through weakness, or ignorance, as children, nor through the delusions of seducers, turned off from it, or be unsettled in it, was one great end why the Lord Christ instituted this office therein. And upon their discharge of this duty depends the growth, the obedience, the edification, and salvation of the whole body. And therefore doth the apostle give this principally in charge unto the elders of the church of Ephesus, in his solemn giving of it up unto their care and inspection, when he himself was no more to come among them; Acts xx. 28. 30. 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.' As he hath a regard unto other things, so in an especial manner to the introduction of perverse and corrupt opinions, contrary to the truth wherein they had been instructed by him, which comprised the whole counsel of God, concerning their faith and obedience, with his own worship; ver. 27. This they were to do, by their careful, faithful, diligent declaration, vindication and defence of the doctrine which they had received. Especially doth he press this upon his beloved Timothy. He being for a season fixed in the ministry of the church, he was chosen out by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, to be a pattern and example in the instructions given unto him, unto all ministers of the gospel in succeeding generations. This charge is

expressly committed unto him, 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. 'I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:' ver. 20. 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of scientice falsely so called:' 2 Tim. ii. 13, 14. 'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.' And what he was enjoined in his own person, that also he was directed to commit unto others with the same charge, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved incorrupt in succeeding generations: 2 Tim. ii. 1, 2. 'Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' The vehemency of the apostle in this charge, and his pathetical exhortations do sufficiently evince the moment and necessity of this duty, as that without which the church would not be continued to be 'the ground and pillar of truth.'

There are three repositories of sacred truth, or of the truths of the mystery of the gospel; the Scripture, the minds and hearts of believers, and the ministry of the present age. In the first, God preserveth them by his providence; in the second, by his Spirit and grace; in the last, by way of an ordinance or especial institution for that end.

In the first way they have been kept and shall be kept safe against all oppositions of hell and the world, unto the consummation of all things. And if this way might fail, we acknowledge that the others would do so also, whatever some pretend of their traditions, and others of their present inspirations. And whilst this doth abide (as it shall always do), the loss that may befall in the other ways may be retrieved. And so it hath been several times, when the faith of the church hath been recovered, and its profession reformed, by the light and knowledge derived afresh from the Scripture. This fountain therefore of truth shall never be

dry, but men may always draw sufficiently, yea, abundantly from it, whilst they use the means appointed thereunto. But yet this alone will not secure the public interest of truth and holiness. There must be other means also of communicating what is contained therein, unto the minds and consciences of men. And the Scripture itself doth both appoint and require a ministry unto this end. Secondly, There may be a preservation of the truth derived from the Scripture for a season in the minds of men, and hearts of private believers. So was it in the days of Elijah, when in a destitution of all outward ministry, seven thousand were preserved in faith and the fear of God, 'not bowing the knee unto Baal;' 1 Kings xix. 18. This the Holy Ghost is in especial manner promised and given unto them to effect, John xiv. 16, 17. 26. xvi. 13. 1 John ii. 20, 21. For herein is the promise accomplished, that 'they shall be all taught of God;' John vi. 45. which though it be not wholly without means, yet it is such as doth not always and in all things indispensably depend thereon; Heb. viii. 11. And unto this work of the Spirit, preserving the truth in the minds and hearts of true believers, the continuance of it in the world, as to its power and profession, under great and general apostacies, is to be ascribed. So I no way doubt, but that during and under the papal defection, there were great numbers in whose hearts and minds the principal truths of the gospel were preserved inviolate, so as that by virtue of them they lived unto God and were accepted with him. But this way of the preservation of the truth is confined unto individual persons, and as such only are they concerned therein. As unto public profession and the benefits thereof, all sacred truth is committed unto the ministry of the present age, and on the due discharge of their office and work it doth depend. The imagination of the church of Rome about keeping sacred truths in the hidden cells of tradition, or invisible fantastical treasures, which requires neither care, nor wisdom, nor honesty unto its custody, but a mere pretence of key to open it, was one engine whereby both truth and holiness were driven out of the world.

These things are inseparable. Gospel truth is the only root whereon gospel holiness will grow. If any worm corrode, or any other corrupting accident befall it, the fruit

will quickly fade and decay. It is impossible to maintain the power of godliness, where the doctrine from whence it springs is unknown, corrupted, or despised. And on the other side, where men are weary of holiness, they will not long give entertainment to the truth. For as to their desires and affections, they will find it not only useless but troublesome. Hence the great opposition which is made at this day against many important truths of the gospel, ariseth principally from the dislike men have of the holiness which they guide unto, and require.

Secondly, It is required of the same persons, that they diligently instruct the people in the knowledge of the whole counsel of God, in the mystery of the gospel, the doctrine of truth, that they may know and do the will of God. And this are they to do by all the means and ways that God hath appointed, pressing it instantly, together with instructions on their souls and consciences for its practice. The end why evangelical truth is committed unto their care, is not that they may keep it to themselves, so locking up the key of knowledge, but that they may communicate it unto others and instruct them therein. And he who doth not desire and endeavour to communicate unto his flock all things that are profitable for them, can have no evidence in his own mind that God hath called him to the office of the ministry. The apostle, proposing his own example unto the elders of the church of Ephesus, affirms, that he had 'not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God,' Acts xx. 27. and that he 'kept back nothing that was profitable unto them;' ver. 20. Men begin to talk or write about preaching on this or that subject: some, they say, preach all about Christ and grace, and justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the like; but they preach about God's attributes, moral duties, obedience to superiors, and things of that nature. But whether this fancy have more folly or malice in it, is not easy to determine. It is like those who make this plea, do speak truly as to their own concernment. They preach of the things they express exclusively unto the others, which they meddle not with at all. For if they do teach them, then is the opposition they fancy between those ways of preaching altogether vain. But that others do preach the things ascribed

unto them with a neglect of those other doctrines which such persons pretend to appropriate to themselves as their province, is a fond imagination; and to increase the vanity of it, the distribution is made by some with a total silence on all hands, both on their own which they extol, and that of others which they condemn; of that which certainly ought to be the principal subject of all preaching, namely, Jesus Christ and him crucified. But the truth is, he who knows not that it is his duty to declare unto the people, not this or that part of it, but the whole counsel of God, and who is not endowed with some measure of wisdom, so as to discern what is useful, profitable, and seasonable unto his hearers, according as their spiritual states and occasions do require; knows not what it is to be a minister of Christ or his gospel, a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, nor is meet to take that office upon him. And there are three things which ministers, teachers, leaders of the people, are to attend unto in the discharge of this principal part of their office, in the communication of the knowledge of the truth committed to them, unto others.

1. That they are to do it with all care, diligence and sedulity. How vehement is our apostle in his charge to this purpose. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. 'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.' How ought these words to sound continually in the ears of all ministers who design to be faithful in the discharge of their duty? How ought the power of them to abide on their hearts? Are they spoken alone unto Timothy? Or will the souls of men be preserved, edified, saved, now with less pains, and at an easier rate, than formerly? It will appear at the last day, that others also have an eternal concernment herein.

2. That they labour with the utmost of their strength, even to fatigation and weariness. All the names whereby their office and their work are expressed in the New Testament, do include this kind of labour. As they are to 'give themselves unto the ministry of the word,' Acts vi. 4. that is, wholly and entirely in their utmost endeavours, conti-

sually unto this work; so are they enjoined κοπιᾶν, 'to labour to the utmost of the strength' they have therein; 1 Tim. v. 17. 1 Cor. xvi. 16. 1 Thess. v. 12. It is not bodily labour alone in the dispensation of the word (wherein there may be much variety according unto the various natural dispositions or tempers of men, and of acquired gifts), but that earnestness and intension of spirit which will carry along with them the laborious pains of the whole person, that I intend. The cold formal pronunciation or reading (as is the manner of some) a well-composed oration, doth not well express this labouring in the word and doctrine.

3. That their whole work and all their endeavours therein be accompanied with constant prayer, that the gospel in their ministry may run and be glorified, that the word may prosper in the hearts and lives of the people. So the apostle affirms, that they would 'give themselves continually unto prayer and the ministry of the word;' Acts vi. 4. That ministration of the word which is not accompanied with continual prayer for its success, is not like to have any great blessing go along with it. As our apostle calls God to witness of his frequent mention of them in his prayers unto whom the word was preached, Rom. i. 9, 10. so he desireth the prayers of others also, that his work and labour in the ministry might be prosperous and successful; Eph. vi. 18. For a minister to preach the word without constant prayer for its success, is a likely means to cherish and strengthen secret atheism in his own heart, and very unlikely to work holiness in the lives of others.

Thirdly, It is in like manner required of them, that (so far as human frailty will permit) they do in their persons, ways, and walkings, or conversations, especially in the discharge of all their ministerial duties, give a true representation both of the doctrine which they preach, and of him in whose name they dispense it. What meekness, humility, zeal for the glory of God; what moderation, self-denial, and readiness for the cross; what mortification of corrupt affections and inordinate desires of earthly things; what contempt of the world; what benignity, condescension, and patience towards all men; what evidences of heavenly-mindedness are required hereunto, both the Scripture declares, and the nature of the thing itself makes apparent.

What can any men rationally believe, but that they who preach Christ and the gospel unto them, do declare that they have no other effect or tendency but what in themselves they express and represent unto them? There is a secret language in the ministry of men, that what they are and do, is that which the doctrine they preach doth require, which their hearers do understand, and are apt to believe. The very philosophers saw that so it would be with respect unto them who publicly taught philosophy. To which purpose the words of Thernistius are remarkable. Orat. 1. *Ἀνελευθέρους τέ δὴ οὖν οὕτως εὑρίσκοντες καὶ φιλοχρημάτους τὲ καὶ ἅρπαγες, λοιδόρους τὲ καὶ φιλαπεχθήμονας καὶ ἀλαζόνας, δολερούς τὲ καὶ ἐπιβούλους, οὐκ οἰήσονται ἐκ φύσεως ἢ τῆς προτέρας βανανσίας ἔχειν τὰς κῆρας, ἀλλ' αἰτιάσοντας ἐκ φιλοσοφίας προσγίνεσθαι.* Whatever vices most men observe in such persons, they will not attribute them unto their depraved natures or inward corruptions, but unto the philosophy they profess. Hence it is enjoined them, that in 'all things they shew themselves patterns of good works;' Tit. ii. 7. 2 Thess. iii. 9. 'Be thou' (saith our apostle unto his Timothy) 'an example unto believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;' 1 Tim. iv. 12. This is the dignity, honour, and preferment, that the Lord Christ calls his ministers unto, namely, that they should in their own persons represent his graces and the holiness of his doctrine unto others. Those who are otherwise minded, whose designs and affections look another way, will find themselves to fall under the effects of a great mistake. I do not reflect any thing upon what outward, secular, circumstantial advantages men may have in this world; but I do say, whatever they have of that kind, which doth not enable them the more effectually in their course and work to express the meekness, humility, self-denial, and zeal of Christ, with the holiness of the doctrine they teach, or should so do, it will not redound unto any great account in the kingdom of God.

Fourthly, It is also incumbent on them to attend with diligence unto that rule and holy discipline which the Lord Christ hath appointed for the edification of the church, and the preservation of it in purity, holiness, and obedience. This indeed most pretend a readiness to comply withal, as

that which is condited unto their appetite by an appearance of authority and power, which seldom are unaccompanied with other desirable advantages. I shall only say, it will be well for them by whom they are administered according to the mind of Christ; but, that more belongeth thereunto than is usually apprehended so to do, I suppose few sober and intelligent persons will deny.

That these things, yea, and many others of the like kind, with all those duties which are subservient or any way necessary unto them, are required of all ministers of the gospel, teachers, guides, rulers of the church, and that constantly to be attended unto with zeal to the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men, none, I suppose, who profess themselves Christians, will in general deny. And if in these things the life and power of the ministry (whereon the purity and holiness of the church depend) do consist, where they are wanting it is morally impossible but that the generality of the people will gradually degenerate into ignorance, profaneness, immorality, and unholiness of every kind.

There is nothing I could more desire, than that the present defection from evangelical holiness, which is so visible in the world, might neither in whole nor in part be charged on a defect in these things among this sort of men; yea, that it might not be so unto qualifications, principles, and actings directly contrary unto what is thus required. For if it be not so, there will be yet hopes of a stay to be put unto its progress, yea, of a healing and recovery from it. But I shall a little inquire into that which offers itself unto the view of all, premising these two things. 1. That I do not intend the ministry of any one place, or nation, or age, or time, more than another, but shall speak indefinitely unto what hath been and is in the Christian world. 2. That if indeed upon trial none be found blameworthy, none defective in these things, there is no harm done, in that any are warned what to avoid. And,

1. Have they all kept the truth and doctrine and mysteries of the gospel, committed to the ministers thereof? (1.) Are there not many of this sort who are themselves wofully ignorant of the counsel of God revealed therein? Nay, are there not many who have neither will nor ability

to search into the mysteries of the doctrine of Christ, and do therefore despise them? Can men keep in a way of duty what they never had, nor ever used those means for the attaining of it, without which it will not be so done? And is it not manifest what must needs be, and what really are, the effects and fruits hereof? Do not hereon multitudes perish for want of knowledge, and continue in the ways of sin because they have none to teach them better, at least not to teach them on such principles as are alone effectual unto their conversion and holiness? They must die, they shall die in their sins, but the blood of their souls will be required at other hands. For all the causes of gospel holiness, all proper motives unto it, all effectual ways and means of attaining it are hid from them.

It is known how brutishly ignorant the generality of their priests are in the papacy; neither, for the most part, do the rulers of that church require any more of them, than that they have skill enough to read and manage their public offices of devotion. Neither is it much otherwise in the Greek church in any of the branches of it, whereby whole nations, under a public profession of Christianity, are through stupid ignorance degenerated into a profane course of life, no less vile than that of the heathens. It is well if it be not so in some measure in other places also. But the truth is, the ignorance of many who take upon them the office of the ministry, and their unconscionable idleness when they have so done, is the great occasion of the continuance of profaneness and ungodliness among the people. And if the preaching of the gospel be the only sovereign effectual means appointed by God for the change of men's natures, and the reformation of their lives (a denial whereof includes a renunciation of Christianity), it is a vain expectation that either of them will be wrought in such a way as to restore the beauty and glory of religion in the world, unless provision be made for an able ministry to instruct the body of the people through all their distributions in knowledge and understanding.

2. It is the duty of this sort of persons unto the same end, to preserve the truth pure and uncorrupted. Unless this be done carefully and effectually, holiness will not be maintained or preserved in the world. And it is evident

how many of them have acquitted themselves herein, as hath been in part declared in the foregoing account of apostacy from the doctrine and truth of the gospel. By them it hath been, principally, debased, corrupted, perverted, and continueth yet so to be. Neither is there at this day scarce any one doctrine that should really promote evangelical obedience, which is free from being despised or depraved by some of them. But this is not that which we now speak unto, it hath been done already. Our present inquiry is after that love and care of, that zeal for the truth, which are eminently required of them. Do they pray and labour, and plead with God and man for its preservation, as that wherein their principal interest doth lie? Or do many esteem of it any farther but as their outward advantages are secured by it? A fault there is in this matter, and it is not without the especial guilt of some that the world is come to such an indifferency about the principal truths of the gospel, that from thence men slip into atheism every day.

3. Neither are these defects supplied by diligence in their work; yea, the want thereof is of all other evils in this kind most evident. No words are sufficient to express the sloth and negligence, the coldness and carelessness that are found amongst many in the discharge of their duty, as to the instruction of others, and the application of the word of God to the hearts and consciences of men. I shall not mention particular instances, that none may be offended. The matter itself is evident, and the effects of it manifest. It may seem to some desirable that such things should be concealed; but whilst by reason hereof the souls of multitudes are in danger of eternal ruin every day, those who are sensible of their misery may be allowed to complain. How few therefore do diligently and industriously lay out themselves and their strength in the ministry, with zeal for the glory of God and compassion unto the souls of men? How few do take heed to themselves and to the flocks, do watch and pray, and press their message on the consciences of their hearers? Alas! it is but little of saving truth that many know in the notions of it, less they care to communicate unto others, because they know it not in its power. Will the souls of men be brought into the obedience of faith; will the power and interest of sin and the world in them be cast down and de-

stroyed; will gospel obedience be preserved in the lives of men by such weak and languid endeavours as many satisfy themselves withal? If it be so, conversion unto God, and the fruits of holiness, must be looked on as most easy things, and the ministry itself to be of little use in the world. Certainly, there is another representation of these things in the Scripture; and notwithstanding the growth of some opinions that would render the whole work of Christianity so easy and facile as to be accommodated unto a negligent ministry, yet the event thereof is openly pernicious. Wherefore, we need not fear to say, that coldness, lukewarmness, sloth, and negligence, especially when accompanied with ignorance and spiritual darkness about the principal mysteries of the gospel, with an inconcernment of mind and affections in the importance, end, and design of their work, among them who are looked on as the public teachers of the church at any time, or in any place, keeps open a wide door for the lusts of men to pour forth themselves into that deluge of apostacy from the power of godliness, which the world is even overwhelmed withal.

So was it with the church under the Old Testament, as God by the prophets complains in a hundred places. Can any man be so stupid as to imagine, that the ordinary discharge of the priestly office in the church of Rome, in saying their offices at canonical hours, hearing of confessions, and giving absolutions, without the least dram of labouring in word and doctrine, is a means to keep up the power of Christian religion, or is not an effectual means to drench mankind in sin and security? Neither doth the calling of things by other names, change their natures. Wherever there is the same neglect of the true work of the ministry, in the matter of it, or manner of its performance, the same event will ensue thereon. And it will be nowhere more fatal than where men love to have it so, and despise whatever is spoken to the contrary, so as that it shall be esteemed a crime for any one to be dissatisfied with the soul-ruining sloth and negligence of this sort of men.

4. Moreover, whereas great relief in all these cases might be taken from a holy exemplary conversation and walking, among them in whom it is required as an ordinance of God for the direction and encouragement of the people; it is ma-

nifest in the world, and sufficiently taken notice of, that many of them in their own persons are openly ambitious, insatiably covetous, proud, sensual, haters of them that are good, companions of the worst of men, evidencing the depraved habits of their minds in all signal instances of vice and folly. He that shall consider what was the state, what were the lives of the apostles and first preachers of the gospel, with those who succeeded them for some ages following, not merely as to their outward condition of straits and poverty (which as it will be pleaded, was occasioned by the state of things then in the world), but as to that humility, lowliness of mind, self-denial, contempt of the world, zeal for God, purity of life, which they prescribed unto others, and gave an exemplification of in themselves; and then take a view of that universal contradiction unto them and their ways, which the lives and course of very many in the world do at this day openly express, he must conclude, that either all those things were needless in them as to the public interests of Christianity, or that they are unspeakably endamaged by those of some at present.

Wherefore it cannot with any modesty be denied, but that by reason of these and the like miscarriages in the spiritual guides of the people, that the generality of Christians have been either led, or suffered insensibly to fall into the present apostacy. When God shall be pleased to give unto the people who are called by his name, in a more abundant manner, 'pastors after his own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding,' when he shall revive and increase a holy, humble, zealous, self-denying, powerful ministry, by a more plentiful effusion of his Spirit from above, then and not until then may we hope to see the pristine glory and beauty of our religion restored unto its primitive state and condition.

Those who do yet judge, that matters among the common professors of Christianity, as to the obedience of faith, are in as good a posture as they were at any time formerly, or as they need to be, who have no other desire or interest in them, but only that they should not be better; may abide in their security without troubling themselves with these things. But for such as cannot but see that a revolt or defection from gospel obedience, is not only begun in the

world, but carried unto that height that it is ready to issue in idolatry or atheism, it is time for them to consider under whose hand this hath fallen out, and be stirred up to put a stop unto its progress, before it be too late. Nor is it to be expected or fancied that there will be a recovery of the people from ungodliness and profaneness, or unto the holy obedience the gospel requireth, until there be such a change wrought in the ministry, that the word may be so dispensed, and such examples given, as may be effectual unto that end. It is to cast the highest contempt on the office itself, to imagine that this breach can be otherwise healed. For whereas this declension is fallen out under the conduct of the present ministry, and that of the foregoing ages, it is not to be thought that it will be retrieved under the same conduct; and to suppose that it can be done any other way, that the world of professed Christians shall be recovered unto holy obedience by any other means but the ministerial dispensation of the word, is to render it a thing altogether useless. Here then must begin the cure of that lethargy in sin that the world is fallen into, namely, in the renovation of a powerful evangelical ministry, or the due discharge of that office by them that are called thereunto, or possess the place of it, if ever it be effected unto any purpose in this world.

CHAP. X.

Other causes and occasions of the decay of holiness.

SECONDLY, Multitudes are led into, and countenanced in, the ways of sin and profaneness, freely indulging unto their lusts and corrupt affections, by a false appropriation of justifying names and titles unto them, in ways of sin and wickedness. This was one principal means of old whereby the Jews were hardened in their impieties and flagitious lives. For when the prophets told them of their sins, and warned them of God's approaching judgments, they opposed that outcry unto their whole ministry, 'The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these;' say what you please, we are the only posterity of Abraham, the only church of God in the world. This contest they ma-

naged with the prophet Jeremiah in an especial manner; chap. vii. he saith unto them in the name of the Lord, 'Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place,' ver. 3. their reply and defence is, 'The temple of the Lord,' &c. ver. 4. Whereunto the prophet makes that severe return, ver. 9, 10, 'Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name?' Will you give up yourselves unto all manner of wickedness, and countenance yourselves therein by being a people unto whom the temple and the worship of it is appropriated? And this in like manner was the great prejudice which the Baptist had to contend withal when he came to call them to repentance. Abraham's children they were, and by virtue of that relation had right unto all the privileges of the covenant made with him, whatever they were in themselves; Matt. iii. 9. And it is evident in these examples, that the nearer churches or persons are unto an utter forfeiture of all their privileges, and destruction itself for their sins, the more ready they are to boast of and support themselves with their outward state, as having nothing else to trust unto. But if men were able to countenance themselves in their sins on this pretence against that extraordinary prophetical ministry which endeavoured to discard them of it, and called them unto the necessity of personal holiness; how much more will they be able to shelter themselves under its shades, when they shall be taught so to do?

When men who have given up themselves unto a vicious, sensual, worldly course of life, having either fallen into it by the power of their lusts and temptations, or were never brought into a better course by any means of correcting the vices of nature, shall find, that notwithstanding what they are, what they know themselves to be, and what judgment others must needs pass of them, yet that they are esteemed to belong to the church of Christ, and are made partakers of all outward privileges of it, it cannot but greatly heighten their security in sin, and weaken the efficacy of all means of their reformation. And when others, not so engaged in the ways of sin and profaneness, shall see that they may have all external pledges of divine love and favour communicated

unto them, although they should run into the same compass of riot and excess with others, it cannot but insensibly weaken their diligence in duty, and render them more pliable subjects of temptations unto sin. For they are but few who care to be better than they judge they must be of necessity. When the church of Sardis was really dead, the principal means of keeping it in that condition, was the name it had to be alive.

Let us, therefore, consider how it hath been in the world in this matter. Whilst these things have been communicated promiscuously unto all sorts of men, yea, to the worst that live on the earth, is it not evident that the name of the church, and the administration of its ordinances, would be made use of to countenance men in a neglect of holiness, yea, a contempt and hatred of it? Whilst these sacred names, titles, and privileges, these pledges of the love of God, and of all the benefits of the mediation of Christ are forced to lackey after men into the most provoking courses of flagitious sins, what can put a stay to the lusts of men? If the church be that society in the world which is alone the object of God's especial love and grace, if the principal end of the administration of its ordinances be to confirm unto men their interest in the benefits of the mediation of Christ, how can the lusts of men be more accommodated than by the application of these things unto them, whilst they are flagrant in their pursuit? It may indeed be supposed, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath made evangelical obedience to be the immoveable rule of an interest in his church; indeed, whether obedience unto the precepts of the gospel be not the only and indispensable condition of a participation of the privileges of the gospel, ought to be out of dispute with them that own the truth of its doctrine. And whereas all that is required of us that we may be eternally saved, is contained in the precepts of the gospel, men can have no other outward security of their souls' welfare, than what doth accompany the church and its rights. When therefore they do find on what easy terms they may hold an undefeasible interest in them, so as that by a compliance with some outward forms or constitutions, they may secure their right from any impeachment or forfeiture by the most profligate course of life, which for the satisfaction of their lusts they can betake them-

selves unto, what remains of outward means that can put a restraint upon them?

This was the engine whereby Satan promoted that general apostacy from evangelical obedience which befell the church of Rome, in all its branches, members, and adherents. For, after that innumerable multitudes were brought into the profession of Christianity, not through a conviction and experience of its truth, power, holiness, and necessity unto the present peace and eternal welfare of the souls of men; but in compliance with the rulers of the nations and their own secular interest, being once safely lodged (on most easy and gentle terms) in the church, they were quickly secured from all apprehensions of the necessity of that holiness which the gospel doth require. For being assured, that although their lives were worse than those of the heathen, were they never so lewd, filthy, and wicked, did all manner of sins that may be named, or ought to be named, abound among them; yet that they, and they alone, were the church of Christ, and could not be otherwise; to what purpose should they trouble themselves with mortification, self-denial, purity of heart and hands, and such other ungrateful duties? What ground is there to expect the same course of obedience from them who engaged into a profession of Christianity on these terms, with those who in the primitive times embraced the truth in the love of it, for its own sake, with a deliberate resolution to forego all things, rather than to forsake its profession, or decline from its commands?

Especially were men confirmed in their security when they saw others condemned body and soul unto hell, and consumed with fire and sword in this world, for not being what they were, that is, the church. They could not choose but applaud their own happiness, who on such easy terms were certainly freed from present and eternal flames. When hereunto for the necessary satisfaction of some convictions, the reliefs of confession, penances, commutation, and redemption of sins by outward works of supposed piety or charity were found out, with the great reserve of purgatory in all dubious cases, the generality of men bid an open farewell unto the holiness of the gospel, as that wherein they were not concerned, and wherewith they would not be troubled.

In these things consisted the mystery of iniquity, the springs and occasions of that great apostacy which was in the world under the papacy.

1. The doctrine of the gospel (as to its peculiar nature, the causes, motives, and ends of it) was generally lost, partly through the horrible ignorance of some, and partly through the pernicious errors of others, whose duty it was to have preserved it. And how impossible it is to maintain the life and power of obedience when this spring of it is dried up or corrupted, when this root is withered and decayed, is not hard to apprehend. Sometimes truth is lost first in a church, and then holiness; and sometimes the decay or hatred of holiness is the cause of the loss of truth; but where either is rejected, the other will not abide; as we have declared. And so it fell out in that fatal apostacy; these evils promoted and furthered each other.

2. The ground got by the loss of truth, was secured by the application of the name, title, privileges, and promises of the church unto all sorts of men, though living impenitently in their sins. For there was and is virtually contained therein an assurance given unto them, that they are in that condition wherein the Lord Christ requires they should be, which he accepts, approves, and hath annexed the promises of the gospel unto. When men were declared to be in this estate, what need they be at any pains or charge to have it changed or bettered? Certainly, in general they are too much in love with their lusts, sins, and pleasures to part with them, unless they see a greater necessity for it than such a condition would admit. And for their farther security herein, they were informed, that the sacraments of the church did, by virtue of their administration alone, confer unto them all the grace which they do signify. Particularly they were taught to believe, that every one who had a mouth (whatever villanies his heart and life were filled withal), might eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Jesus Christ (at least by concomitancy), which himself hath assured us, that who so doth, 'shall have eternal life;' John vi. 53, 54. And other ways almost innumerable there were, whereby, through their pretended interest in the church and its privileges, even flagitious sinners were secured of immortality and glory.

3. For the increase of their satisfaction, of the confirming of their security, they found that hell and destruction were denounced only against them who were not of the church. For besides one great maxim of truth which passed current amongst them, but falsely applied unto their advantage, namely, that out of the church there was no salvation, which church they were; and one also of no less use to them, though of less truth in itself, that the church was like Noah's ark, all were saved that were in it, and all drowned that were out of it, with others of an alike encouraging nature, they saw the truth of them exemplified before their eyes. For if it so fell out, that there were any who did not belong unto the church as they did, nor would comply with it, although they were evidently in their ways and lives more righteous than themselves, they saw them by the authority of the church, cursed, condemned unto hell, cast into dungeons, and consumed with flames. And herewith they could not but be fully satisfied, that there was no fear of danger and trouble in this world or another, but only in not being of the church, which sin they were resolved not to be guilty of, seeing they could avoid it on so easy terms. And it will be found always true, that as persecutions, with the sufferings of the saints of God, do tend to the brightening of the grace of some, and the confirmation of the faith of others who really believe; so they do greatly unto the obdurateness and impenitency of wicked men in their sins. Never was there a more pernicious engine against the glory of the gospel invented, than for professed Christians to persecute, hurt, and destroy others in like manner professing Christian religion with themselves, who visibly excel them in a holy fruitful conversation, because in some things they dissent from them. For what can more secure men in their impieties, than to persuade them that they are justified in them by the rule of the gospel, above those who in all duties of morality do really excel them? Certainly, for swearers and drunkards, profane persons, and unclean, to persecute such for religion as are visibly pious, sober, temperate, given unto prayer and good works, is no useful representation of Christianity. But,

4. These privileges and these attestations were not ab-

solutely and always such armour of proof unto sinners, but that some arrows of conviction would ever and anon pierce into their minds and consciences, giving them no small disquietment and trouble. One thing or other, either in some beam of truth from the gospel, or from conscience itself, on the occasions of new surprisals in actual sin, or from fear, or an apprehension of some public judgments, would ever and anon befall them, and that unto an inward disturbance, beyond what the advantages mentioned could reduce them from. And this was the most likely way of awaking them out of their security, and causing them to inquire what God yet required of them. In this case were the other helps and supplies mentioned, found out and proposed unto them. If it be so that you are not absolutely satisfied with your interest in the advantages of the church in general, if sin will yet give you any disquietment, then you must to confession, and penances, and works of redemption, with the like approved medicines and remedies for troubled minds. But if the conscience of any prove so stubborn or inflexible after all these mollifying and suppling medicines, that the wound will not be skinned over, all that is yet wanting shall be well issued and secured in purgatory, wherein it is most certain that never any soul did miscarry.

By these and the like means, the generality of mankind was brought into an utter unconcernment with gospel holiness. They neither understood it, nor found any need of it, nor did like what by any means they might hear of it; until at length a blind devotion, deformed with various superstitions, obtained the reputation of it; the world in the mean time being drenched in ignorance, profaneness, and all manner of wicked conversation. So under the name of the church and its privileges, were Christ and the gospel almost utterly lost amongst men.

It will not be otherwise where the same principles are entertained, according unto the degrees of their prevalency. And were it not but that the minds of men are powerfully influenced with reserves from these things, it were impossible that so many called Christians, should in their lives and conversations exceed heathens and Mahometans in wickedness. The commands of the gospel are most holy, its

promises great, and its threatenings most severe; and yet under a profession of owning them all, men lead lives worse than the heathens, who knew nothing of that holy rule, or those promises and threats of eternal things wherein the highest blessedness and utmost misery of our natures do consist, which these profess to be regulated by.

To suppose really the least countenance to be given hereunto by any thing that belongs unto the gospel, is to exercise against it the highest despite imaginable. This event therefore must and doth principally follow, on the undue application of the outward tokens of God's favour and pledges of eternal blessedness unto men in their sins, by those unto whom the administration of them is supposed to be committed by Jesus Christ. And let none expect a return of a conversation becoming the gospel among Christians, until things are so ordered in the church, as that none may flatter themselves with a supposed interest in the promises and privileges of the gospel, who live not in a visible subjection unto, and compliance with, all the precepts of it. But whilst all things are huddled together promiscuously, and there is no more required to make a Christian, than for him to be born in such a place or nation, and do not oppose the customs and usages in religion which are there established; we must be content to bear the evils of that defection which the world groans under.

Thirdly, Great examples of persons exalted in places of eminency giving up themselves unto boldness in a course of sinning, which have fallen out in all the latter ages of the church, have had a signal influence into the increase and furtherance of this apostacy. Especially they have had so where the persons giving such examples have been such as pretend unto the conduct of religion; see Jer. xxiii. 15. It cannot with any modesty be denied, but that the flagitious scandalous lives of many popes and other great prelates of the court of Rome, have hurried many into the very depths of atheism, and countenanced multitudes in a careless, voluptuous, sensual course of life. And if at any time a man whose ways are made conspicuous by the eminency of his employment, being as it were at the head of all the religion that is publicly professed, and having the chief conduct of it in his hand, as it is in the papacy in many places,

be vain in his communication, profane in his principles, sensual in his course of life, negligent in the duties of his office, no way rebuking open sins, but taking pleasure in them that do them; it is incredible how soon a whole age or generation of professed Christians will be influenced, corrupted, and debauched thereby. For what is the family like to be, when the stewards are such as the evil servant described, Matt. xxiv. 48—50. As men are warned every day not to be wiser than their teachers, but duly to obey their guides, so they either cannot or will not for the most part see any reason why they should be better than they, or walk in any other paths than what they tread before them. When the sons of Eli, the sons and successors of the high-priest, actually exercising the priests' office in their own persons, gave the people an open example of profaneness and lewdness of life, the body of the nation was quickly so far corrupted, as that the judgments of God in the first captivity of the land ensued thereon. The world at present is so precipitate and headstrong in a course of sin, that the best examples are not able in any measure to stem the torrents of it. But if in any place, at any time, encouragements are given unto men by any eminent examples in sinning, helping to remove the remaining curbs of fear, shame, and reputation, impudence in sinning will arise unto an exorbitant and uncontrollable outrage. Hereby then hath the defection from holiness complained of, been greatly promoted in all ages; for few or none of them have wanted plenty of these examples. Indeed the first visible degeneracies of Christianity, as they accompanied so they were occasioned by the open pride, ambition, strife, contentions, and conformity unto the world, that possessed the minds and stained the lives of far the greatest part of the prelates and principal leaders of the church, after it came under the protection of the Roman empire, and men thought to purchase an interest in the good things of religion, or at least a representation of them, by giving power, wealth, and honour, unto persons no way better than themselves, who had got the name and title of the clergy, or guides of the church. For about these things they contended endlessly, to the shame of Christian religion, and the utter loss in the most of the true real power and virtue

of it. And in following ages, as things grew worse and worse, the lewd and wicked lives of popes, prelates, and others, signalized unto the world by their power and dignity, did by their examples insensibly bring about a public conformity unto their vices, according as the concurrence of opportunity and ability did enable men thereunto. Wherever therefore persons shall fall within the compass of the ministry of the church, or as guides thereof are on that account (on what principles soever) exalted unto places of eminence or dignity, whereby they are made conspicuous and observable; if they do not proportionably exceed others in visible exemplary holiness, at least, if they be not unblamable in such a godly conversation as truly expresseth the grace of the gospel, in humility, meekness, contempt of the world, sensual pleasures, and the pride of life, zeal and diligence in the dispensation of the word, it cannot be but that apostacy from the gospel, as to its power and holiness, will be kept up and promoted.

Fourthly, This apostacy hath been very much promoted by persecution. I mean not that persecution which hath befallen the sincere constant professors of Christianity from the avowed enemies thereof, upon the account of their profession of it. This is so far from being any cause or occasion of a defection from the holiness of the gospel, as that it hath been the peculiar glory of our religion, and a notable outward means of the increase of it. So hath it been with respect unto the whole doctrine of the gospel in general, and so it is with respect unto any especial branch or part of it. It was the primitive glory of Christian religion, that it set out in the face of a universal opposition from the whole world, and not only made good its station, but increased under the fiercest persecutions, until it had finished that glorious conquest which it was designed unto. And not only did it preserve its being, and enlarge its extent under them, but they were means also to preserve its purity, and to exert its power in the hearts and lives of its professors. The church never lost finally either truth or holiness by the violent persecutions of its avowed enemies. But I speak not of the outrages committed on the flock of Christ by wolves in their own skins, but by such as have got on sheep's clothing; for these things, in whomsoever they are,

proceed from the uncured wolfish nature in persons on whom the gospel hath not obtained its promised efficacy; Isa. xi. 6—9. It is professing Christians persecuting one another, about some differences among themselves concerning their apprehensions of spiritual things and practice of divine worship, that I intend. And this hath been so great, especially in the latter ages of the church, that it is questionable whether there hath not greater effusion of the blood of Christians, ruin of families, and devastation of nations, been made by them who have professed the same religion in general, than by all the pagans in the world since the first promulgation of it. He that shall impartially read the gospel, will not be able to discern how it was possible that any such things should ever fall out among those who pretend to avow it as their rule and guide, in any measure. For the whole design, and all the rules of it, are so expressly contradictory unto any such practice, as that no man who had not learned the contrary from the event, could possibly conjecture that any persons could ever fall into it, without an antecedent renunciation of the gospel itself. But thus in process of time it did fall out unto the irreparable scandal and detriment of Christian religion; and that so it would do, was foretold. For the principal design of the book of the Revelation is, to foretel and delineate such an apostate state of the church, as wherein the external power prevailing in it, should persecute, destroy, and kill those who would not comply in the apostacy; for which reason, together with idolatry, that state is called Babylon. And we all know how it came to pass under the power and prevalency of the Roman church. And we may observe, that upon the destruction of Babylon it is said, that 'in her was found the blood of the prophets and saints, and all that were slain on the earth;' Rev. xviii. 24. that is, for the gospel and the profession thereof. Whoever, therefore, offereth violence unto the life of any on the account of their profession of the gospel and religion of Christ, be it under what pretence it will, he doth therein and so far join himself unto that apostate state which shall be destroyed. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to restore that love of God which was departed from our nature, and thereon that love unto and among mankind which the law of creation originally re-

quired, and that advanced unto a higher degree of worth and excellency by an addition of new motives, duties, and ends unto it. He came to save the lives of men, and not to destroy them; to deliver them out of a state of enmity and mutual hatred, into that of peace and love. And can any sober man imagine, that the hurting, imprisoning, fining, banishing, killing, and destroying of men for no other reason or cause in the world, but for believing in Christ, and worshipping of him according as they are invincibly convinced they ought to do, is a good and due representation of this design of Christ? Nay, is it not evident that this practice draws a veil over the glory of it, obscuring the principal attractive beauties of the gospel, and teaching the world a Christian religion, fierce, cruel, oppressive, vindictive, bloody, to the utter exclusion of that which is so indeed? There is therefore no more expedient course to draw off the minds of men from the due consideration of one principal end of the mediation of Christ (which is to turn them from the gospel, and to substitute another gospel in the room thereof, which yet is not another, because it is none, whatever it pretends), than for those who profess Christian religion to persecute others of the same profession for their profession, pleading this to be a duty of that religion. Wherefore, when the generality of mankind, by what they heard and saw, were persuaded that this was the true religion, namely, variously to persecute, and at length to destroy others, who professing it did yet in some things dissent from them in power, they had lost the true gospel, and the benefits of it.

Besides, that religion is alien from the gospel, at least includes a notable defection from it, whose avowed profession doth not represent the spirit, graces, and virtues of him who was its author. Yea, conformity unto him in all things is the sum and substance of that obedience which it doth require. But in this way of external force and persecution, there seems to be an appearance of the spirit of Mahomet and antichrist rather than of our Lord Jesus Christ. And hereby are the minds of men infected with false notions and apprehensions of the nature of Christian religion, which whilst they conform themselves unto, they depart from the glory and power of it. It hath been suffi-

ciently elsewhere evinced, how contrary also this practice is, to the most plain rules and principal ends of the gospel. And when at any time there is this kind of persecution prevailing among Christians, there is not so much as the form, face, or appearance of Christianity left amongst men. All that love, charity, peace, meekness, quietness, condescension, mercy, compassion, benignity towards mankind, which belong essentially unto Christian religion, are forced to give way to wrath, strife, revenge, evil surmises, false accusations, tumults, disorder, force, rapine, and every thing that is evil. Whereas therefore this course hath been steered in many places of the world, and yet continueth so to be, the generality of men must needs be much untaught the truth of religion thereby. For that kind of profession thereof which is consistent with such practices, is not directed in the least by the gospel. And when the minds of men are hereby unframed, they are unsuited unto all other evangelical duties. Whatever advantages any shall pretend to have by this means accrued unto the truth (as they suppose) in some few instances, yet as none can be so immodest as to deny but that it hath been a thousand times more subservient unto the interests of error; so no pretended advantage of truth can countervail that corruption of Christian morality which hath been introduced and countenanced by it.

Fifthly, Want of watchfulness against the insinuation of national vices, and the prevailing sins of any present age hath effectually promoted an apostacy from evangelical holiness among the generality of Christians. There are some vices, crimes, or sins, that particular nations (on what grounds I shall not now inquire) are peculiarly inclined unto, which therefore abound in them. For it is evident what great advantages those vices must have on the minds of men, and how easy it is to have their practice imposed on them. All men are continually encompassed with them in their occasions, and commonness takes off the sense of their guilt. That which would be looked on in one nation as the greatest debauchery of human nature, is through custom in another passed by without any animadversion. Hence the prevalency of the gospel in any nation may be measured by the success it hath against known national

sins. If these are not in some good measure subdued by it, if the minds of men be not alienated from them and made watchful against them, if their guilt appear not naked without the varnish or veil put upon it by commonness or custom, whatever profession is made of the gospel, it is vain and useless. Thus the apostle allows that there were national sins prevalent among the Cretans, Titus i. 12, 13. 'One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.' Whatever their profession were, if they were not delivered by the gospel from the power and practice of these national sins which they were so prone unto, they would not long be sound in the faith, nor fruitful in obedience. So among the Jews there was a peculiar kind of stubbornness and obstinacy above any other nation under heaven, which God complaineth of in their successive generations from first to last, and which continueth to be their characteristical evil unto this day. Hence Josiah was eminently commended, because his 'heart was tender,' 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. He was not under the power of the common sin of that people, which indeed includes all other evils whatever. It was a rare thing to find one of a tender heart among them.

And we may observe (it being easily demonstrable), that the great apostacy which is at this day among the nations which have received the Christian religion, consists in a degeneracy into those customs, manners, humours, and course of conversation which were common among them, and national before the entrance of Christianity. Set aside an outward profession and formality of worship, and the generality of men in most nations live as they did formerly, and are given up greatly unto those vices which were prevalent among them in their heathenism. A full evidence this is, that the power of evangelical truth is lost among them, the efficacy thereof consisting in curing the vices of nature, and those evils which men have been most habituated unto, as the prophet at large declares, Isa. xi. 5—9.

Thus the sin of this nation hath been always esteemed sensuality of life, in an excess of eating and drinking, with the consequents thereof. Hereunto of late hath been added

vanity in apparel, with foolish, light, lascivious modes and dressings therein, and an immodest boldness in conversation among men and women. These were corruptions which being borrowed from the neighbour nation, and grafted on crab-stocks of our own, have brought forth the fruit of vanity and pride in abundance. And it is the most manifest evidence of a degenerate people when they are prone to naturalize the vices of other nations among them, but care not to imitate their virtues if in any kind they do excel. But thus the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are joined unto the lusts of the flesh, to give the world, as opposite unto God, a complete interest among us. It may be these things are restrained in some by contrary vices, as covetousness and an earnest desire or ambition to enrich a family, and leave a name amongst men; a vanity infused amongst mankind from the great design of the builders of Babel, which was to make unto themselves a name; Gen. xi. 4. This is but another way of the exercise of the same sin.

Now where sins are thus national and common, it is easier for men to preserve themselves from the most raging epidemical disease, than from being in one degree or other tainted with the infection of them. It is almost inexpressible how efficaciously they will insinuate themselves into the minds and lives of men. They are so beset on every side with the occasions of them, and temptations unto them, they offer themselves continually with so many specious pretences, as that there is no security against them but by being encompassed with 'the whole armour of God;' a matter that few understand or apply themselves unto. But it is not on any other grounds, or by any other means, for single persons to hold out and prevail against a national confederacy in sin. For they who will not say 'A confederacy' to them, or in those things wherein a whole people shall say 'A confederacy,' must be contented to be for 'signs and wonders,' to be despised and even hooted at; Isa. viii. 11, 12. 18. However, it is apparent, that by them the general apostacy we treat of is visibly and openly promoted. Some are engaged in them by a corrupt course of education, and some are betrayed into the entrances of them by sloth, negligence, and security; some lose a sense of their guilt

by their commonness; some yield to the arguments that are pleaded, if not in their justification, yet in their excuse, or for their extenuation; one way or other, multitudes of all sorts are by them turned away from gospel obedience. Hence it is come to pass, that Christianity is (as unto customs, manners, vanities, vices, and way of conversation) sunk down into heathenism; or prevalent national sins have drowned the power, and left little but the outward form of it in the world. And where it is so, the life, substance, and all the real benefits of the gospel are renounced. For it doth not design only to turn men in their outward profession from 'dumb idols to serve the living God,' to change the form and outward state of religion, as the Roman missionaries have made conversions of the Indians, giving them new images instead of their old idols, and new saints for their former Zemes; but to turn men also 'from all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world.' Where this is not effected, either the gospel never really prevailed among men, or they are fallen away from it. And where men do engage into a profession of religion, disallowing and condemning such national vanities, vices, and customs, if they are publicly countenanced, they occasion particular apostacies every day. This is that which on the one side and the other hath almost lost the Protestant religion in some neighbour nations. For not being able to hold out against those national vanities and vices which are publicly countenanced, they find no relief unto their minds but in a renunciation of that religion by which they are condemned. And this I look upon as the principal means of that general defection from evangelical holiness which prevails in most nations. The gospel comes upon a nation as on a wilderness or forest that is full of such wood, thorns, and briers, as the soil of itself is peculiarly disposed to produce. These it cuts down to the ground, planting good and noble plants in their room, whereby the barren wilderness becomes for a season a fruitful field; but in process of time, if continual care and culture be not used about it, the earth pours out of its own accord the weeds and briers which are natural unto it. These springing up abundantly, choke the other plants and useful herbs, whereby the fruitful field is turned again into a wilderness. There

needs no more unto this apostacy, but that national vices for a time suppressed by the power of the word, should overgrow the generality of any people, whereby the graces of the gospel will be certainly stifled and choked.

Sixthly, Mistakes about the beauty and glory of Christian religion have been no small cause of apostacy from its power and holiness. That it should have a glory, somewhat that might render it honourable in the eyes and esteem of men, was always thought unquestionable, and it is certainly true; provided that we suppose those with whom we have to do, have eyes to see that glory, and minds enlightened to make a true judgment of it. In compliance herewithal was religion outwardly figured and represented among the Jews. And as the apostle declares that the worship of God in the administration of the gospel is truly glorious, and eminently so above what was to be found in the administration of the law; so Christian religion is in itself truly honourable, and contains in it every thing that is so, in the judgment of God and the rectified reason of mankind. But about the true notion and apprehension of that glory and honour which is proper unto religion, and suited unto its nature, men have fallen into many woful mistakes. For whereas it principally consists in the glorious internal operations of the Holy Spirit, renewing our natures, transforming us into the image and likeness of God, with the fruits of his grace in righteousness and true holiness, in a meek, humble, gracious conversation, and the performance of all duties according to the rule; few are able to discern beauty or glory or honour in these things. But yet where there is not an eye to discern them, the gospel must of necessity be despised and abandoned, and somewhat else substituted in the room thereof. This therefore also proved a great furtherance of the general apostacy, and continues an efficacious means of keeping multitudes under the power of it unto this day. For,

1. Through the loss of spiritual light, and neglect of the grace of God, things were come to that pass in the world, that those who had the conduct of religion saw no real glory themselves in the things wherein all the glory of the religion taught and appointed in the gospel doth consist. And they are but few that do so at this day. Therefore the profession that is made of them by any, is generally looked

on as hypocrisy mixed with a certain kind of superstition, and is accordingly despised. Yea, nothing is more contemptible in the world, than the possession and profession of those ways which are truly, if not only, noble. Their view therefore being lost in the eyes of the leaders of the church, it could not be expected that they should be instrumental to open the eyes of others, or careful to instruct them how to look after what themselves did not discern.

2. They were fully satisfied, that there was in these things no evidence of glory unto the eyes of the generality of mankind, whereunto they thought it wisdom to accommodate themselves and the notions of religion. Men naturally can see no more beauty in the spiritual powers of Christianity, than the Jews could see in the person of Christ when they rejected him, because unto them he made no appearance thereof; Isa. liii. 2. That religion should be set off and represented as truly glorious and honourable in the eyes of men, they thought it incumbent on them to take care. But leaving herein the judgment of God, of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as declared in the Scripture, they accommodated themselves unto the carnal apprehensions of them with whom they had to do, which were also suited unto their own. Wherefore, that this glory of religion consisted in a ministry in the church humble, holy, laborious, eminent in the graces and gifts of the Spirit, looking for no honour or respect but for their works' sake; in a worship plain, unadorned, spiritual, whose life and excellency consists in the invisible, effectual administrations of the Spirit of God, in meekness, self-denial, mortification of sin, and the fruits of righteousness proceeding from the grace of the Holy Ghost, they neither did apprehend themselves, nor could imagine that others would be of that mind. For the world generally supposeth the direct contrary unto all these to be honourable and glorious. Things which have a pretence of height and gallantry of spirit, a religious worship set off with such ornaments and modes as to affect the outward senses, with somewhat that may give satisfaction unto lust and conscience at the same time, are the things which unto the most are alone desirable. Wherefore, all pretence unto the power of religion dwindling away into an empty jejune form and appearance of it in monkery, the sup-

posed glory of Christianity in the world issued in these three things:

(1.) The secular pomp and grandeur of the rulers of the church. This was designed to beget a reverence unto their persons and offices, without which religion itself would be despised. And it is easily conceivable how by this means their minds were drawn off from a due consideration of all those things which are truly honourable in them, and the neglect whereof will be the loss of the power of religion in the most at any time. For when they had secured unto themselves that honour, respect, and reverence, which they esteemed needful unto the glory of religion, and found very suitable unto their own desires and ends, to what purpose should they trouble or perplex themselves with those hard duties of exemplary mortification, self-denial, and painful labour in the work of the ministry, when the whole of what they aimed at, or needed, was prepared for them? And how corrupt a spring of apostacy brake forth hereon, hath been before declared.

(2.) A pompous ceremonious worship, which began to be introduced by a pretence of outward solemnity, and ended in plain superstition and idolatry. And hereby were the minds of men diverted and taken off from inquiring after that spiritual exercise of the graces and gifts of the Spirit, wherein alone the beauty of evangelical holiness doth consist.

(3.) In works of magnificence and bounty, wherewith the clergy were enriched, and the consciences of men pacified in a course of sin or an unholy life. When the world was once persuaded, that in these things consisted the glory and beauty of religion, and found them all readily compliant with their lusts and darkness, that real holiness and obedience which is required in the gospel was every day more and more neglected and despised. Besides, it is not expressible, what wicked scandalous practices in pride, ambition, divisions, and contentions among the leaders of the church, did spring from and ensue on these principles. Henceforward no small part of ecclesiastical story is taken up with fierce contentions and quarrels about the pre-eminence, dignities, privileges, and jurisdiction of the prelates. Those who were wise and sober among the heathen observed this evil among

Christians, reporting it as that whereby their religion was debased and corrupted. Such is the account given by Ammianus Marcellinus, of that bloody and scandalous conflict between Damasus and Ursicinus, whether of them should be bishop of Rome, lib. 27. cap. 6.

Seventhly, During these seasons, Satan (as he will never be) was not wanting unto his own occasions and advantages; and they are altogether ignorant of his devices who discern him not at work even at present unto the same end and purpose. Nor is it possible that in any age, time, or place, the glory of the gospel should be abated, and the principal endeavour therein not to belong to him. He is the head and leader of every apostacy from God. Therein he began his work in this world, and in the promotion of it, he will finish it. And as he engaged all his power and art against the head of the church, so by his total defeat in that attempt, wherein he made the clearest discovery of his pride and malice against God that it is possible for him to do, he is not discouraged from pursuing the same design against the whole church itself. And the way now insisted on hath been the chiefest path that he hath beaten in his course. For, from the very entrance of Christianity he began to immix himself with all those lusts of men whereby a defection from its power and purity might be set on foot and effected. And he engaged against it in both his capacities, as a lion and as a serpent: as a lion he stirred up, acted, and animated all those bloody persecutions whereby the Jews and pagan world attempted for three hundred years to exterminate the Christian profession. But herein his success was answerable to that of his attempt against the head of the church, and ever will be so, by virtue of the victory the Lord Christ had over him in the same kind of conflict. The force of the devil and the world having been once fully broken and subdued by Christ, it shall never prevail in the issue against his followers. Satan, in a confederacy with the world, may as a lion through rage and blood make a great bluster, and scatter the churches of Christ for a season, but prevail unto the ruin of the church in this way, he never did nor shall. And if at any time by national devastations he do so far succeed as to expel the gospel from any place or country for a season, it shall be evident unto all that it shall turn greatly

unto its advantage in general, and in other places. Let not then any fear his bloody fury as to the interest of Christ and the gospel in the world. As sure as he was conquered and triumphed over in the cross of Christ, he shall finally be so in all such attempts. Happy and blessed are they, and shall they be, by whose blood and temporal ruin his power at any time is or shall be broken. So I say it fell out in his first attempt in this way against Christian religion. For through the efficacy of the grace of Christ, and by virtue of the victory obtained against him in his own person, he was overcome by the blood and constancy of innumerable holy souls, until he was cast out of the havens of the world, and an end was put unto his rage. But in the mean time whilst this sworn enemy of the church made all this bluster as a lion, and raised all these storms of persecution, which the minds of all the professors of Christianity were intent upon, and generally much fortified against, he was secretly at work as a serpent also. Herein he secretly and gradually infected the minds of many with ambition, worldliness, superstition, and a neglect of the power and simplicity of the gospel. That this is his work as a serpent, our apostle declares, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. And herein sometimes 'he transformed himself into an angel of light,' as he speaks in that place; ver. 13—15. For he not only poisoned and inflamed the lusts of men, but drew them aside from the gospel by suggestions and pretences of more piety and devotion, or at least of other outward modes and means of their expression, than it did require. So did the 'mystery of iniquity' work in the days of the apostles themselves; 2 Thess. ii. 7. He was at work secretly by ways and means not easy to be discovered, to draw off the minds of men from evangelical truth and holiness, by sowing the seeds of that ambition and superstition which afterward spread themselves over the face of the whole visible church. So was he the spirit which animated the apostacy which by various and insensible degrees prevailed in the following ages. Those who acted in it and promoted it, never knew any thing of the design, but added one thing unto another, which gave it increase as occasion was offered. But in him the projection was designed, and regularly carried on from the beginning. Hence had it the name of 'The mystery of iniquity,' as being insinuated and promoted by such unsearchable me-

thods or depths of Satan, that those for the most part who were subservient to his design, knew not what they did, though sufficiently warned in the Scripture of what he would do, and what should come to pass. Wherefore, being disappointed, as was said, in his endeavours by outward force and persecution (as he will ever be), leaving the name, power, and advantage of the church unto them that professed Christianity, he made use of all the darkness, ignorance, errors, ambition, and lusts of men, gradually to draw them from the truth and holiness of the gospel. And he ceased not until he had brought Christian religion to be looked on as made up principally, if not only, of those things which by his crafts and the lusts of men were introduced into it. So did he pursue his work, almost undiscovered, until the generality of those who professed Christian religion were given up to the power of sensual lusts on the one hand, or brought under the power of superstition on the other. All this he attempted, and in a great measure effected of his own accord. But after that men had voluntarily given up themselves unto his delusions, rejecting the truth and holiness of the gospel, as unto their love to them, and delight in them, God in his righteous judgments gave them up unto his power, to be infatuated by him, and hardened to their eternal ruin. So the apostle expresseth it, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' Thus was the apostacy completed under the papacy. And by the same artifices is Satan still at work among us unto the same ends and purposes.

Moreover, among the occasions of the present decay of holiness and the power of Christianity in the world, we may reckon the scandal that hath been given by, or is justly taken at, those who have professed the most strict obedience unto the rules of the gospel. There is nothing difficult herein, but only to choose out the most pregnant instances in the multitudes which offer themselves, to evidence this occasion. Nor do I intend such offences as some men will enviously seek after, and sometimes causelessly create, but such as are really given, and offer themselves unto the consideration of all sorts of men. Of these I shall mention two only, which are the most obvious and extensive. And,

1. Offence hath been taken at the divisions that have been among them, and continue so to be, with the management of them in an evil contentious frame of spirit. The Lord Christ hath declared and appointed, that the mutual love of his disciples should be the great testimony of the truth of his doctrine, and the sincerity of their obedience. He hath also commanded them to be one in heart, mind, and affections, praying for them also that so they might be. His commands and directions unto this purpose are known unto all who know the gospel, and so need not here to be repeated or insisted on. The blessed effects and fruits of them were eminent for a season among the professors of the gospel, and their mutual love was a convincing argument of the truth, efficacy, and holiness of the doctrine which they did profess. For where there is oneness and love thereon, there is peace, order, usefulness to mankind, and every good work; whereas the want of them is attended with strife, envy, confusion, disorder, and every evil work whatever. Some divisions indeed happened among the primitive Christians, but were quickly healed by the spirit of apostolical authority, and that love which was yet prevalent among them. But afterward all things grew worse, and the first visible degeneracy of Christianity consisted in the strifes, divisions, and contentions of its professors, especially of their leaders. And these in no long process of time proceeded unto that excess, and were acted with such an evil spirit of pride, ambition, envy, and malice; that the very heathens made themselves sport with their contentions, and observed that there were no sort of men in the world so ready for them, and implacable in them, as the Christians of those days were. But when once one or other party of them got into power, and snatching that sword of force and violence out of the hands of pagans, which had been imbrued in the blood of the holy martyrs, began in the pursuit of their divisions to persecute one another (which way carnal men having tasted the sweetness and advantage of, as that which gratifying their envy, malice, and ambition, doth also, as they suppose, secure all their earthly concerns, they would not forego, nor have so done until it is become the top-stone of many men's religion), it was merely from the unspeakable care and mercy of God that they made not the gospel an abhorrence unto all flesh. For who, not yet en-

with that light and grace which might secure him from
ower of such temptations, could look on the fierce, de-
ng, bloody contentions of its professors, and that
ly on its own account, and not suppose that itself pro-
l from a spirit of malice, strife, and disorder? But the
and faithfulness of God, preserved it against all the
sitions of its adversaries, and in the midst of the
heries of its avowed friends. Thus was it in the primi-
times, which as it was the first considerable stop unto
progress of the gospel, so it was one principal cause of
the conversations of many, filling them with a
rit in all things directly opposite unto that of the
el. The differences with their untoward management
h fell out among the first reformers, was the chief means
hindered their work from a universal success.

it much otherwise among the strictest sorts of pro-
at this day? Do not some seem to aim at nothing
n to multiply and increase divisions, and to delight
nothing more than to live and dispute in the flames of
? There is not the least different apprehension of
s minds about any thing in religion, but such persons
suppose it a sufficient ground to quarrel and contend about
it for ever. By such ways and means scandals are given unto the world in its proneness unto apostacy, and seeking occasions for it, or countenance unto it, which is its present posture. For these things are not done in a corner. Men who know nothing of the inward power and virtue of that religion which is in such professors as it is hoped, seeing and observing those other distempers among them, are really alienated from all the good they do profess; and not only so, but do from thence justify and approve themselves in their immorality and profaneness, as those which allow them a better condition than such wranglers can afford them. By this means hath religion lost much of that awful authority in the world whereby it ofttimes put a restraint on the minds and consciences of men, who were never acted by its power. What are the rules whereby we ought to walk under the continuance of these differences, and what are the best means to put an issue unto them, I have inquired in a treatise unto that purpose. But it must be acknowledged, that for the most part, attempts for the rebuking of these

distempers, the reconciliation of dissenters, and the uniting of professors, have been managed from such principles, and in such a frame of spirit, as have heightened and increased rather than allayed or diminished them.

2. Great offence is given to the world by the uselessness of professors, and in that they are not what they ought to be, the common good and blessing of mankind. There is a selfish spirit on many of them, whence contenting themselves with abstinence from known sins, and the performance of the religious duties of divine worship, they are of little or no use unto others. Some will be kind, benign, helpful, good in some measure unto other men; but yet will and do give undue bounds and limits unto their actings in this kind. Their own household, and the household of faith, according unto that measure which from opinion or prejudice they take of it, they will alone regard. As for love, condescension, benignity, kindness, readiness to help, assist, and relieve all mankind, yea, the worst of men, as they have opportunity, they understand them not; yea, have many pretences that they are not required of them. But if we are Christians, it is required of us to 'abound in love towards all men,' 1 Thess. iii. 12. and our doing good unto all, being useful unto all, exercising loving-kindness in the earth towards all, is the principal way whereby we may express our sincere obedience unto the gospel. One professor that is kind, benign, condescending, charitable, useful, ready to become all things unto all men for their good, brings more glory to the gospel than a hundred who are looked on as those who live too much unto themselves. When the old saying was, 'Bonus vir Caius Sejus, sed malus quia Christianus:' 'such a one is a good man, evil only in this, that he is a Christian;' religion did by such convictions insensibly get ground amongst men. If the world cannot see that it hath any advantage by professors, but hath trouble on the other hand by the hatred which it cannot but have of their profession, it is no wonder if it desire to have no more to do with them. Did men find that so soon as any gave themselves unto the strictest ways of profession, that therewithal they became benign, kind, merciful, charitable, useful, and helpful unto all men, it could not but give an honourable reputation in their minds unto that religion

which they do profess. But an observation of a contrary frame and temper in such persons, and of how little use they are in the world, must needs produce contrary effects. By reason of such miscarriages as these, and others of an alike nature, whereby some professors are so far from adorning the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as that they cast (what lies in them) a blemish and reproach upon it, others are every day hardened in their alienation from all its concerns.

These few instances have I given of the means and ways whereby a general apostacy from the holy precepts of the gospel, as the rule of our obedience, hath been begun and carried on. Many others of an alike nature might be added unto them; but it is to no purpose to insist long on the nature of a disease, when we find it to despise all possible remedies. Sovereign grace yet remaineth, whereunto this state of things is referred.

And this apostacy, in its measure and proportion, partakes of the guilt of that prescribed in the text which we made the foundation of this discourse. For therein also is Christ 'crucified afresh, and put unto open shame.' For,

1. All persons who profess the Christian religion, and yet are thus fallen off or alienated from its holiness, do really renounce and forego the commands of Christ, and those as enlivened by his promises, for the pleasure and wages of sin. And herein do they openly declare and avow as the judgment and resolution of their minds, That there is not that excellency in his precepts, nor that goodness, beauty, desirableness, or satisfaction in obedience unto them, or not that assurance in his promises, or worth in the things promised, as that they ought to be preferred before the course of the world and the pleasures of sin. Hence some commands of the gospel (and those of no small importance unto the furtherance of holy obedience) are neglected and cast from among the generality of Christians. Such are the commands for mutual love, whereof there is scarce any shadow left in the world. For that pretence of it which some seem to rest in, and plead for as satisfactory, in the peaceable and, as they say, loving converse of persons in their civil and ecclesiastical distributions, is no other than what is found among Mahometans and pagans on the like

occasion, which, as it is good and commendable so far as it proceeds from and is suited unto the light of nature, so it no way answers either in the kind of it, or in its acts and fruits, unto that evangelical love which the Lord Christ requires among his disciples. That watchfulness over one another with love, care, and tenderness, those mutual admonitions, exhortations, and consolations which the gospel so frequently and diligently prescribes unto us, are not only neglected, but so far despised, that the very naming of such duties is made a matter of scorn, as a pretence of hypocritical preciseness. And no better entertainment have many other of the commands of Christ among the generality of them that are called Christians. So do many, on all accounts, openly profess in their walkings and conversation, that they see no cogent reason why they should comply with him in his commands. And it is not easily to be conceived how they can cast a greater dishonour or contempt upon him.

2. By continuing in the outward profession of Christianity, they do most falsely represent Christ and the gospel unto the world, and thereby (what lies in them) put him to open shame. For, pretending to yield obedience unto him, and to place their hope for life and blessedness in him by the gospel, they profess withal, that he is a person that will approve of such ways as they walk in, and his gospel a doctrine that gives countenance unto all manner of licentiousness in sin. Who would judge otherwise who had no knowledge of him or it, but by the representation that is made of them in the profligate conversation of such apostates? But this argument I have elsewhere insisted on.

CHAP. XI.

Apostacy from evangelical worship.

THAT which was proposed to be considered in the last place, is that apostacy which is in the world from the purity of the worship of the gospel as appointed by Jesus Christ. And herein principally did consist that great defection foretold

by our apostle, 2 Thess. ii. which is also prophesied of in the Revelation, and did accordingly come to pass. But because I have insisted on this subject on many other occasions, and some things relating thereunto are under difference and debate among such as are capable of the warning given concerning the apostacy that is in the world, I shall wholly wave the consideration of particulars, about which any such differences may be, and only mention such things as the generality of Christians, at least of Protestants, cannot but acknowledge.

I shall take it for granted at present, that our Lord Jesus Christ did institute and appoint a solemn worship of God to be continued inviolably and unalterably unto the end of the world. And the principal end of his appointing, continuing, or preserving any church on the earth, is the celebration of this worship. For herein alone consisteth that public revenue of glory, which God requires from believers in this world. All other duties of the gospel may be performed by men in their single capacities, if there were no such thing as a church on the earth. And those churches do exceedingly mistake their duty, and every end of their being, which make it not their principal business to take care of the due celebration of that worship, which the Lord Christ hath appointed. 'He was faithful in the whole house of God as was Moses;' Heb. iii. 6. And if the life, being, happiness, and welfare of the church of Israel, consisted in and depended on their remembrance of the law of Moses, which 'God commanded unto him in Horeb, with the statutes and judgments,' Mal. iv. 4. because he was 'faithful in the house of God' as a servant; certainly the being and well-being of the Christian church consists in, and depends upon, that observing and doing of all whatever he hath commanded in the worship of God, as Matt. xxviii. 18. who is faithful as a son, in and over the whole house of God.

Besides, it is acknowledged by all, and we shall, God willing, shew the manner of it in our exposition of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the Lord Christ in and by the gospel, hath altered and abolished all that solemn worship, all those ordinances and institutions, which God himself had set up under the old testament, to continue unto the time of reformation. And hereby he rendered it absolutely

unlawful for any one to serve God according unto those institutions. Hereunto God signally set his public seal of approbation in the sight of the world. For no sooner had the Lord Christ, by the promulgation of the gospel, taken away all their authority and obligatory power, so as that his disciples ought not to make use of them any longer; but that God immediately, by severe and unparalleled judgments, destroyed the seat and place of them, so that those who would, yet never could regularly make use of them unto this day. And shall we think that the Lord Jesus Christ thus took away, and abolished the old solemn worship of the church, and substituted none in the room of it? or that he took away that which was erected by the wisdom of God, though but for a season, and left the church, as to its main duty and principal end in this world, unto the inventions and imaginations of men? One of these must be supposed, if it be denied that he hath established a solemn worship of God, to continue unalterably unto the end of the world; and both of them are highly blasphemous. Again, let any in faith and obedience unto him, practise and attend unto all those parts of divine worship which he hath appointed, and I am persuaded no man will have the confidence to say, that there is this or that wanting to render it a solemn and acceptable service; however they may contend for the conveniency of some circumstantial additionals. Wherefore, I take it for granted at present, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed such a solemn worship under the gospel, which all his disciples are obliged constantly and invariably to observe, as he declares, Matt. xxviii. 20. And with respect hereunto men may fall away and apostatize from the gospel, no less sinfully and fatally than they may fall from the mystery of its doctrine, or the holiness of its precepts. And there are two ways whereby this may be done. 1. By neglecting and refusing to observe and do what he hath appointed. 2. By adding appointments of our own thereunto, inconsistent with and destructive of that which he hath ordained.

1. In the first way we have some among ourselves who are fallen off from the worship of the gospel. It is true, they will do some things which have an appearance of being what Christ hath commanded. Such are their first-days'

meeting, and their prayers, with speaking in them. Rebellion neither observe the Lord's day, nor pray or speak in obedience unto any institution of his. Convenience and the light within are all the reason and guide which they plead for them. And for the sacraments, or baptism and the supper of the Lord, which are so great a part of the mystical worship of the church, on I know not what fond pretences, they utterly reject them. In like manner they deal with a stated ministry as of Christ's appointment, although they have found out means to set up one of their own.

And because herein also Christ is put unto open shame, we shall briefly inquire into the grounds and reasons of this defection, from the obedience due to his commands.

(1.) Now the principal reason (and which comprisetth all others) why some men have forsaken the gospel as unto the administration of its ordinances, is because they are not any suited unto, nor indeed consistent with, that faith and obedience which they have betaken themselves unto. For the ordinances of the gospel are representations of the things which we believe, and means of the conveyance of their efficacy unto us. Unto the confirmation of that faith, and our edification therein, are they suited, and to nothing else. Now these persons having fallen (as we have shewed) from the faith of the gospel in the mystery of it, and the spiritual obedience which it doth require, of what use can the ordinances of worship be unto them? For instance; the ordinance of the Lord's supper is instituted in the remembrance of the death of Christ, of his suffering in our stead, of the sacrifice he made of himself therein, of the atonement or reconciliation with God that he wrought, and of the sealing of the new covenant with his blood. To what end should any man solemnly worship God in and by this ordinance, who upon the matter believeth none of these things, at least doth not believe them as proposed in the gospel, namely, as the principal causes and springs of life, righteousness, and salvation? Those who believe in God through these things, who find the effects of them upon their souls in righteousness and peace, cannot but delight to be found in the exercise of faith through this ordinance, as they know it to be their duty so to do. But it is apparent, that neither this nor the other ordinance of baptism do contribute any thing

to the furtherance, increase, or establishment of that light within men, which upon the matter they resolve their faith and obedience into. Yea, they are in their true and proper notion, as both directing unto the sanctifying and justifying blood of Christ, diametrically opposite thereunto, and unto what is ascribed unto it. It is therefore so far from being strange that these men should forsake these ordinances of gospel worship, that the admission of them in their true and proper use and signification, is destructive of the whole scheme of religion which they have formed unto themselves. Where the faith of the gospel is forsaken, the ordinances of worship must be so too, and so all instituted divine service be neglected, or other things found out that may suit unto the imaginations whereunto men are turned aside.

(2.) Another reason hereof hath been want of spiritual light to see through the veils of outward institutions, and of the wisdom of faith to obtain communion with God in Christ by them. Our worship under the gospel is either absolutely spiritual, or that which comes immediately unto what is so. But in these institutions there is somewhat that is outward and sensible; and it is to be feared that many do rest in these outward things, and proceed no farther in the worship of God by them, than the actions and words that are used will carry them: but they are, as appointed by Christ, 'animæ vehicula,' means of leading and conveying the soul unto an intimate communion with God. That they may be so unto us, three things are required.

[1.] That we submit our souls and consciences unto the authority of Christ in these institutions. Unless this be the foundation which we build upon, the whole service will be lost unto us.

[2.] That we rest on the veracity of Christ for the working of the grace and accomplishment of the mercy represented in them, and sacramentally exhibited by them. For they will not profit them by whom the promises of Christ (virtually contained in them, and accompanying of them) are not mixed with faith; and we cannot believe the promise, unless we submit to the authority of Christ in the appointment of that whereunto it is annexed.

[3.] That we understand in some measure the mystical relation that is between the outward symbols of the ordinance

and the Lord Christ himself, with his grace represented thereby, wherein the nature, use, and end, of the institutions are contained. And all these are necessary to keep up any delight in them, or a conscientious use of them. Where therefore all these are wanting (as apparently they are in those concerning whom we treat, being none of them either understood, owned, or acknowledged by them; whereas they have neither spiritual light into the internal nature of these things, nor spiritual gifts for their administration unto edification, following the conduct of their own principles), they could do no otherwise but reject them, and therein fell off from the worship of the gospel, and thereby do reflect dishonour upon the Son of God, the author and Lord of all these institutions.

2. There is another way whereby men may, and many men do, fall away, and have for many ages fallen away from the gospel with respect unto its worship; and that is, by rejecting its simplicity and pure institutions, substituting a superstitious, yea, idolatrous worship of their own in the room thereof; 2 Cor. xi. 3. For whereas there are various degrees of declension from the purity of gospel worship, according as men forsake any part of it, or make any additions of their own unto it, yet at present I shall mention them only by whom it is wholly perverted, that is, those of the church of Rome. For as they have added unto it rites and institutions of their own in great number, partly superstitious and partly idolatrous, so there is no one ordinance or institution of Christ which they have not corrupted, the most of them so far as utterly to destroy their nature and use. Whereas therefore the Lord Jesus Christ doth in the ordinances of gospel worship and the due celebration of them, represent his own religion and authority unto the church; to remove them out of the way, and to introduce another fabric of them of another constitution, is to represent antichrist unto the church, and not Christ; and thereby to put Christ unto open shame. The ways and means whereby this apostacy was effected, by the craft of Satan and the carnal interest of men, in a long tract of time, I shall not here declare: it shall suffice at present to observe, That as men grew carnal, having lost the spirit, life, and power of the gospel, and so far as they did so, they found it necessary to introduce a

carnal, visible, pompous worship, suited unto that inward principle and light whereby they were acted. And as the people in the wilderness being carnal in their hearts, and accustomed unto carnal ways of worship, upon the absence of Moses in the mount, cried out unto Aaron, 'Make us gods that may go before us' (that is, gods visibly present), 'for as for this man Moses we know not what is become of him;' whereupon they made a calf; so these men finding the whole fabric of Mosaical institutions, consisting in outward images and representations of things, taken away, and themselves left, as it were, without any present gods to guide them, that is, such visible representations of the presence of God as their carnal hearts and minds might delight in, they provided all those calves whereof their present worship doth consist. And because there were many in those days when this design was first set on foot, who were truly spiritual and holy, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, this idolatrous worship could not be introduced and preserved but by insensible degrees, and in a long tract of time; throughout the whole whereof the 'mystery of iniquity' wrought effectually unto the same certain end. Those in the mean time who worshipped God in truth were either imposed on by a show of humility and devotion in the degrees of apostacy which were added in their days, or else complained of what they could not remedy.

And if these brief considerations of the nature of the present apostacy, that is in the world from the power of Christian religion, in all the principal concerns of it, with the causes and occasions thereof, do excite or provoke any who hath more leisure and ability for this work, unto a more diligent and useful inquiry into them, it will be an ample reward unto my endeavours.

CHAP. XII.

Inferences from the foregoing discourses. The present danger of all sorts of persons in the prevalency of apostacy from the truth, and decays in the practice of evangelical holiness.

THE last part of this discourse is designed for cautions unto those who yet stand, or think they stand, with respect unto

that general defection from the gospel, whose causes and occasions we have thus far inquired into. And thereunto some directions may be added, to be used as preventives of its contagion.

This method are we guided unto by the apostle, who having declared the apostacy and ruin which ensued thereon of the generality of the church of the Jews, improves the consideration of it unto the caution of others, under a present profession of the truth. 'Thou wilt say then,' saith he to the Gentile believers, 'The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off;' Rom. xi. 19—22. And in another place, on an alike occasion, he speaks unto the same purpose; 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

Most men are apt to suppose, that the continuance of the true religion in any place, depends solely on the prudence and industry of those unto whom the conduct of its outward concerns are committed. The interest of some, and the duty of others, in the management of human laws and constitutions, are generally looked on as a sufficient and the only means of its preservation. And those of this persuasion think they have personally no concernment herein, but only to herd themselves in the multitude, and to take their fate, whatever it be. Such as these will despise our cautions, as those from which the reasons of their confidences and fears are most remote. But whereas the profession of religion in the community of Christians, will not be preserved but by the power of it in individuals, the only root whereon it will long thrive or grow; we shall not at all concern ourselves in them by whom the directions of their duty are thought needless or useless. For after the utmost exercise of human policy, it is the wisdom that is from above which must be our stability. And if the power of truth and holiness be not preserved in the hearts and lives of particular persons, the profession of them in churches, or the pretence

of them in nations (which are all that will remain), are neither acceptable unto God, nor useful unto the souls of men.

Some think themselves, as for their own part, little concerned in these things. That there is such a defection from the gospel as hath been complained of, they cannot deny; and they will also grant, that it is desperately pernicious unto them that are overtaken thereby. Therefore they suppose it not amiss, that men should be warned of its danger, and directed to avoid it; but this they think necessary for others, not for themselves. For as for their part, they have not the like occasions, nor are exposed unto the same temptations with them who formerly apostatized from the gospel, or are in danger now so to do. Besides, they know well enough what are their own resolutions; and that though all men should forsake either the doctrine taught in, or the obedience required by the gospel, yet should their constancy be immoveable. But I do not think these apprehensions sufficient to render our warnings needless. Occasions and temptations are not in our power: our greatest present freedom from them, will not secure us from the assaults of the next hour. Peter foresaw not his dangers and fears, when he so confidently engaged into constancy in the profession of his Master, which yet within a few hours came upon him. And such is the subtlety of our spiritual adversaries, that sometimes we are under the power of temptation when we think ourselves most remote from it. It is beyond the compass of human reason, to take at once a prospect of all the causes and means thereof, with the ways of its efficacy and prevalency. And if at any time we judge ourselves free from an hour of temptation, which comes on the world to try them that dwell therein, which most are exercised with, and many are prevailed on by, so as to be secure and regardless of the means of our preservation, of all men we are in the most danger to be ruined by it. Neither will the best of our resolutions be of any avail without the utmost of our endeavours. The great apostle thought and resolved with respect unto the person of Christ, that he would neither deny him nor forsake him; and if this confidence did not betray him into his fall, yet to be sure it did not preserve him from it; and it was upon his own experience that he gave afterward that holy advice, that we should 'give a reason of the hope

that is in us with meekness and fear,' 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15. and 'pass the whole time of our sojourning here in fear;' chap. i. 17. The highest present confidences have ever proved the most deceiving presages of future stability. Wherefore, the utmost I design in the ensuing cautions, is but to excite men unto a due apprehension of their danger, that they be not surprised into that pernicious security, which is the mire wherein this rush doth grow.

1. The consideration of the extent and almost universality of this apostacy may be of use unto this purpose. Ignorance, profaneness, worldly-mindedness, with sensuality of life, have obtained the most eminent catholicism in Christendom. The complaint of the prophet is not unsuited to the present state thereof; Isa. i. 4—6. 'Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores.' Do we hear but of this or that individual person who hath apostatized from a profession of holiness, into a sensual, wicked, worldly course of life, or is turned from the faith into pernicious errors; there is no man that is wise and careful of his eternal concerns, but he will take it as a warning to examine, try, and be careful of himself. And this counsel is laid before us by the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. What then is required of us, when we see nations, churches, multitudes of people by one means or other, degenerated from that power of godliness which once they professed? If we hear that one or other in a city is visited with the plague, we are not altogether insensible of our own concern and danger, because we know how usual it is for the infection of that disease to spread and diffuse itself; but if the whole city be infected, and thousands fall under it every week, there is none so sottish as to need much warning of their danger. And shall we be less concerned for our immortal souls and their eternal condition, than we are for these frail carcases, and their continuance for a few days in the world, which if they escape one distemper, may yet in a few moments fall under the power of another? This spiri-

tual pestilence that hath formerly walked in darkness, is now a destruction wasting at noonday. Nations are depopulated by it, and cities left desolate, as unto their interest in God and the gospel. And is it not high time to look diligently lest the infection reach unto us also, lest we also should 'fail and come short of the grace of God,' and be 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin?' As then our bodies are of the same natural frame and constitution; as they have in them the same humours, the same kind of animal spirits as are in those who are infected with the plague, whereby we are obnoxious unto the same infection with them; so there are in our souls and minds the same principles of sin and love of the world, as are infected, drawn away, enticed, excited, and enraged by outward occasions and temptations, until they have issued in apostacy. Do we think that we shall be always easily preserved (and that whilst we are careless and secure) from that torrent which hath carried away such multitudes before it? Are we in ourselves better than they or any of them? Have we a patent for our preservation, whilst we neglect any ways, means, or diligence that the rule requireth thereunto? Doth not God shew unto us, not one, but many churches and nations, saying, Go unto those Shilohs where I sometimes placed my name, and see what is become of them, and what I have done unto them? Will you go after them; have you a mind to be made like unto them? Think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham to our father;' we have those outward privileges and advantages which they have not; for they also enjoyed the same until they had forfeited them by their apostacy. Certainly the general prevalency of this evil proclaims such a danger, as no wise man, no man that takes care of his own salvation, ought or indeed can neglect. Wherefore, as it is always with Christians, if ever it be a time to watch, to stand on our guard, to take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, to be jealous of ourselves, to be constant and diligent in the use of all means, both private and public for our preservation, it is now a time so to be. And if professors will not be awakened; if they will not stir up themselves with the gifts and graces which they have received; if they will please themselves that all is well with them and is likely so to be; if they will yet immix them-

selves with boldness and confidence in the ways of the world; oh that my head were a fountain of tears! oh that my soul could mourn in secret for them! seeing assuredly they will not be able to stand in that day of temptation which is come upon the face of the earth, to try them that dwell therein. The outward court is long since given to be trodden down by the Gentiles, and how soon the enemies may roar in the very sanctuaries, and set up their banners for tokens, we know not. For,

2. The present state of this defection hath a dangerous aspect. Physicians say, 'Nemo moritur in declinatione morbi;' 'no man dies in the declension of his disease.' And when a public pestilential distemper is in its wane or decay, the danger is esteemed in a great measure over. But whilst a disease is yet growing and daily spreading its contagion, whilst the bills of mortality are every week increased, they are only hardened and profligate persons whom the commonness of the judgment renders regardless and senseless of it. And it is no otherwise with the evil complained of at this day There is almost nothing in the world that all sober men do generally agree in, but this alone, That the whole world doth daily wax worse and worse. Who can give an instance of the decrease or abatement of any one sin, in its love or practice? But that some are advanced to higher degrees of confidence in their perpetration, than former days or ages afford us any president of, every one can declare. What instances have we of a spiritual recovery from any of our decays? What attempts unto that purpose are made by any, unless by such as are not of consideration, as have not advantages to enable them to effect any thing therein? The world is highly at variance about religion, managing its differences with great animosities and industry, how one way, party, and profession may draw persons from other ways and professions. The sole business of the church of Rome, is by all manner of artifices to win over men unto their communion; that is, a subjection of their souls, consciences, and entire interests, here and for eternity, to the authority of the pope. Others bestir themselves as well as they are able, to keep what they have, and to rescue men from their seductions. And yet although they have the advantage of the truth on their side, and for the most part the

advantage of abilities in the management of their cause, yet they visibly lose ground every day; and where one is recovered from the Roman interest, many are added unto it. And there can be no reason assigned hereof, but only that the apostacy is upon its increase, this being one way of it. Half that pains would have formerly turned a whole city from popery, which will not now succeed unto the preservation of one person. But in the mean time, both in one profession and another, all sorts of men continue regardless of gospel holiness and obedience. And whilst they quarrel about the outward form, the inward power of godliness lies neglected. Do we see things any where in the world upon a recovery, or any thriving design for the retrieval of holiness? The name and thing are growing more and more into contempt. What instance can be given wherein this apostacy from the gospel doth or may exert itself, be it in atheism, be it in popery, in hatred of and scoffing at the mysteries of evangelical truth, in worldliness, profaneness, vanity, and sensuality of life; in the coldness in love, and barrenness among professors, that is not openly in its progress? And is this a time to be secure, careless, or negligent? Are we sure that this epidemical infection shall not enter our habitations? Do we not find how it hath one way or other attempted us already? Can we find no decay in zeal or love among ourselves, no adherence unto the world unsuited unto our present state and condition in it; no neglect of duties, no rareness in divine visitations, no want of life and delight in spiritual communion with Christ, no hurtful growth of carnal wisdom, with all its attendants? Or have we not found ourselves one way or other sensibly attacked by these evils? It is to be feared that those who can make no observation of any thing of this nature among themselves, are somewhat sick of the Laodicean distemper. And if we will not be awakened and stirred up to a more than ordinary diligence, care, and watchfulness at such a season as this is, it is to be feared that ere long the generality of professors will come to be in the condition of the church of Sardis, to have a name to live, but indeed and in the sight of Christ to be dead.

3. As this apostacy is yet in its progress, so what will be its event, what it will arise unto, is altogether un-

certain. God can put a stop unto it when he pleaseth, as he hath in his holy purposes fixed bounds unto it which it shall not pass. But in the mean time, being greatly provoked by the ingratitude of a wicked world, no man knows how long he may suspend those more powerful influences and more extraordinary effects of his word and Spirit, which are needful unto the healing of the nations, and without which they will not be cured. I hope for better things, and pray for better things, but I have no certain ground of assurance that this apostacy shall not grow, until in one instance or other of it, it swallow up all visible profession. The whole world, so far as I know of (I mean these parts of it), may become papal again, or be so corrupted in their principles and profane in their lives, as that it is no great matter what their profession in religion be. Two things I do know or believe; namely, 1. That 'the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, God knoweth who are his;' his elect, that truly fear him, and diligently serve him, shall be preserved from perishing eternally, and every thing that necessarily leads thereunto. 2. That God hath appointed a time and season, wherein he will not only put a stop unto this defection from the gospel, but an end also. He will one day execute the vengeance that he hath written and recorded, on the throne, power, and kingdom of the antichristian apostacy, and in one day shall the plagues of Babylon come upon her; and 'he will again turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call on the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent;' Zeph. iii. 9, 10. He will again revive the beauty of his worship, and the glory of holiness in the earth. But in the mean time what things may come unto, I know not. Those who pretend to a clearer inspection into future things, may not do amiss strictly to examine the grounds whereon they proceed. For many have been made ashamed of their predictions, that within such or such a time the yoke of Babylon should be broken. This is all I say (and I say it only for myself), I know no assurance that can be given on infallible grounds, that the apostacy which we are treating of, shall not one way or other, in one instance or other, become again to be catholic, and prevail against all open visible profession of the purity and power of gospel worship and holiness. Now

if this be not so unto others, yet unto myself it ought to be a warning, how I may be thought worthy to escape, and to stand before the Son of man. And I am sure, there is so much danger of it at least, as to deserve the consideration of all who take care of their eternal salvation. For if things should come to such a pass, they are not many, they are but very few who will be entirely preserved. The most will one way or other suffer loss. And it is not an easy thing to be found among the number of the few in such a season. Can we think that men careless in holy duties, cold in zeal, lukewarm in love, barren in good works, cleaving to the world, and conformable unto it, low in their light, dubious in their state, useless in the world, fearful of trials, will be of this number? They are wofully deceived who are pleased with such apprehensions; other principles, other ways, courses, and practices, will be required in them who shall be hidden and safeguarded in that day.

4. The various ways, whereby this defection prevails in the world, should also warn us to stand upon our guard. Were it of one sort only, did it work only one way, or made use of one engine alone for its progress, the evil and danger of it might be the more easily either withstood or avoided. But as we have before referred it unto three general heads with respect unto the doctrine, the holiness, and the worship of the gospel, so under each of them there are various ways and means whereby it is promoted. The infection from this plague is taken innumerable ways; Heb. xii. 1. Some take it in their shops or especial vocations, some in their societies, civil and ecclesiastical, some from the vanities and pleasures, some from the profits and advantages of the world; unbelief, the deceitfulness of sin, corrupt lusts and affections, spiritual sloth, cares about and love of riches, lie all in a readiness to give entertainment to, and to embrace any opportunity, advantage, or means whatever it be, whereby this apostacy may be admitted, and take place in them. See Heb. iii. 12, 13. xii. 15—17. Satan in the mean time labours by his insinuations to corrupt our minds, to poison our lusts, and to supply them with all enveigling or provoking objects; 2 Cor. xi. 3. 1 Pet. v. 12. In this state of things look how many public temptations there are in the world, so many general ways and means are there whereby

this apostacy doth prevail; and who can reckon up these temptations? Hence it is that men fall under this evil such various ways, and unto such various degrees; some do so by errors and damnable heresies, 'denying the Lord that bought them;' some by superstition and idolatry; some by a contempt of gospel mysteries, and preferring another way of duty before evangelical obedience; some by ambition and pride of life; some by love of the world, and a neglect of duties spiritual and moral under a deceiving profession; some by suffering carnal wisdom, and some sensual lusts to devour their convictions and their efficacy; some by the uncertainty of their minds brought to an indifferency in all things supernatural and divine; some by vain-glory and shame to be found among the scorned society of those who are truly religious; and multitudes are initiated into an irrecoverable profaneness, by the vain pomps and spectacles of the age; and other ways there are more than can be recounted, whereby this evil is propagated, and men fall under the power of it. By this means the very common air we breathe in is infected; 1 Cor. xv. 33. Snakes are in all grass whereon we tread, and scorpions under every stone. Snares are laid for us on every hand, and those (some of them) so gilded and set off, that multitudes of loose professors have taken them up, and wear them as their ornaments. Those who escape one evil do every day fall into others. And how shall they escape who are encompassed with so many dangers, if they live in the neglect of any one duty or means of their preservation, that God hath appointed and made useful thereunto?

5. Consider, that there is an apostacy which is irrecoverable; and it will end in eternal ruin. This is that which we are taught in this context, according unto the exposition before given of it. No man in this world can be by the rule of the gospel in an unsalvable condition, that is, be concluded under an unavoidable destruction by any known rule of the revealed will of God, unless it be an apostate. There are also several sorts and degrees of apostacy that may have several causes and effects, and so various events. Great surprisals, strong temptations, negligence in watching against the deceitfulness of sin, may produce temporary abnegations of Christ and the gospel, woful

declensions from the due observation of his commands, with wandering into foolish opinions, and yet persons be recovered from them all, and brought by repentance unto salvation. Signal instances of this grace and patience in God might be given. And this is sufficient to render the despair of them causeless, who are ever awakened in this world time enough to endeavour a deliverance from any sin, or course of sinning, provoking and destructive. For when any man is by any means called to have any thing to do with God about his eternal concernments, God doth not allow him to be the absolute sovereign judge of himself, which would usurp his prerogative, and put the sinner in the place of God. He that despairs, says, I am in the stead of God to myself in this matter; there is neither goodness, nor grace, nor mercy in him but what I can comprehend. And this evil God hath obviated in signal instances of the recovery of great apostates. But yet withal there is (as we have shewed) an apostacy that is irrecoverable; and hereof God permits many examples in this world, to put an awe not only on bold and presumptuous, but also on careless and negligent sinners. For whereas our apostle doth expressly twice mind the Hebrews of this severity of God against apostates, in this place, and chap. x. 26, 27. in the one he doth it with respect unto unprofitableness under the means of grace, and in the other unto a negligence in attending unto the administration of gospel ordinances. Now whereas any men may be overtaken with the beginning of decays and declensions from the holiness and worship of the gospel, all which have a tendency in their own nature unto this irrecoverable apostacy, ought they not to be continually jealous over themselves, lest they should pass the bounds God hath fixed unto his patience and grace? Ought we not to be careful about every sin or omission of duty that hath a tendency unto this doleful issue? For this very end, that we may be warned to take heed of the beginning of apostacy, doth the apostle in this place declare the end of it. The reader may if he please (to help him herein) consult our discourses on chap. iv. 3. It is not an easy task to stop a course in backsliding when once it is entered into. And I shall close this warning with naming two directions unto this purpose. 1. Take heed of a course in any sin.

Though every sin doth not immediately tend unto final apostacy, yet a course in any sin continued, doth so. 2. Take heed of touching on such especial sins as have a peculiar tendency thereunto; and of what nature they are, hath been declared.

6. Our last consideration of this kind shall be taken from the nature and guilt of this sin, wherever it be found, with the severity of God against it. And we may look upon it as it is total, such as that supposed by the apostle, Heb. vi. 4—6. The exposition we have given of the words, will warrant us to conclude, that total apostacy from the gospel once professed is a greater sin, and of a more heinous nature, than that of the Jews in crucifying the Lord Christ in the days of his flesh. This was sufficiently proved in the exposition of the words. It remains only that we do briefly inquire what doth concur unto such a total apostacy, whereby the truth of the exposition and the necessity of the warnings given, will be made yet more evident. And though I shall speak with especial respect unto total apostacy from all profession, yet are the things that shall be spoken, to be found in their degree and measure in all those who are guilty of that partial defection which we have described. There are therefore always found in this great offence the things ensuing.

(1.) The loss of all taste of any goodness or excellency in the gospel, in the truth or state of its profession and worship. There is no man who hath ever made a profession of the gospel in earnest, beyond pretence and custom, but he hath found some kind of taste, relish, or sweetness in the things of it. They 'taste of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;' either in the things themselves, or in the manner of their dispensation, or of the duties of worship enjoined therein, they have found somewhat that hath given their minds and consciences some satisfaction. A man cannot go into a pleasant garden in the spring, but he will smell some savour from the flowers, though he gather not one of them. A man cannot take meat savoury and well condited into his mouth, but he will taste the relish of it, though he have no mind nor appetite to eat it. Nor can any man walk in the sun, but he will have some impressions from its heat. It is so, it can be no

otherwise, with them who live under the preaching of the gospel and make profession of its doctrine. More or less it will insinuate itself into their minds with a taste of its excellency and goodness. This in the case considered is lost in the first place. And generally it comes to pass by a love of sin and pleasures of the world. When this hath filled and possessed the soul, all its senses grow dead unto spiritual things, it hath no faculty or ability to taste any relish in them; yea, it loathes and abhors them as contrary to what it hath immersed itself in, or given up itself unto. This usually is lost in the first place; such persons find nothing any longer in Christ or the gospel, for which they should either delight in them or desire them; and it seems to be thus with so many in the world, who once gave hopes of better things, that the consideration of it is dreadful.

(2.) This is quickly followed with a loss of all prevailing evidence and conviction of the truth of the very doctrine of the gospel. This conviction all are supposed to have who profess it, and all really have it who profess it in any sincerity. Why else do they make profession of it, if they assent not unto its truth upon its conviction and evidence? For we speak not at all of them whose profession hath no other principle or foundation but custom or education. Others build their persuasion upon grounds and evidences prevalent to obtain their assent unto the truth against temptations and objections; this apostates lose in the next place. The truth remains what it was, and so do the arguments and evidences of it; but they have no longer any force upon, or authority in their minds. It may be they do not presently renounce the gospel as a lie, or 'a cunningly devised fable;' they may let the notions of it lie loose in their minds for a season neglected and unregarded, but give them no part of that entertainment which is due unto acknowledged truths of that nature, nor do receive any impressions from its authority. And when men have lost these, they have lost their assent to the truth of the gospel upon its proper evidence, and are directly unbelievers. And this on every occasion will issue in a formal renunciation of the truth of the whole. And when men arrive unto this

posture in their minds, they will discover themselves, as by a conversation wholly regardless of the precepts of Christ, so also by light irreverent expressions concerning the Scripture, which, where they have freedom, will be poured out from the abundance of their hearts. This step towards total apostacy will follow that foregoing. When once men have lost all taste and relish of the goodness and excellency of the word of God on their hearts and affections, they will not long retain any prevalent evidence of its truth in their minds. Hence,

(3.) A contempt of the things promised in the gospel doth ensue. The promises of the gospel do indeed contain those things wherein the evident blessedness and happiness of our natures doth consist. Such is serenity of mind in this world, and eternal felicity in the enjoyment of God. These, for the substance of them, mankind cannot despise until they grow atheistically brutish. But they may, and many do so, in the manner and on the terms of their proposal and declaration by the promises of the gospel. That this enjoyment of God, wherein everlasting happiness consisteth, must be in and through Jesus Christ alone, that the way of attaining thereunto, and the only means of present peace and serenity of mind, is by faith and obedience in and unto him, this they despise and contemn. This naturally follows on the former; for all expectation of good by and from the promises of the gospel, depends on the evidence that we have of the truth thereof. And when that is lost, these will be despised. Now herein consisteth one of the greatest aggravations of this sin. For whereas men cannot but desire the things (for the substance of them) which are promised in the gospel, as those wherein their blessedness doth consist; they will, out of hatred to Jesus Christ, reject and despise them, and eternally deprive their souls of them, rather than accept of them in and through him. They will rather never have any interest in God, than have it by Christ. This rejection therefore of the promises of the gospel, as those which either as to the matter of them are not to be desired, or as to the truth of them not to be trusted, is the most provoking sin. No greater reproach can possibly be cast on Jesus Christ; as that which leaveth him the

honour neither of his truth nor power; neither of which the Jews could in the least impeach, when they took away his life. And,

(4.) They choose some other way or means in the place and stead of Christ and the gospel, for the ends which they once sought after by them. So did those persons who fell off to Judaism. They looked for that in the law and ceremonies which they could not find in the gospel. And of these there are two sorts: [1.] Such as retain their first end in general, but reject the gospel from being a sufficient means for attaining it. [2.] Some that renounce the whole end itself, and seek for satisfaction other ways. The former are such as preserve an aim in general to worship God, to do that in religion which may be accepted by him, and to believe that of him which is right. But they reject the gospel, as an insufficient and deceitful guide in and about these things. And this is done either totally, by such as apostatize to Judaism or Mahometanism; or partially, by such as turn off from the purity, truth, spirituality, and mystery of the gospel unto popery, or the like. I say not this with an intention to charge the guilt of this whole sin on this latter sort; only I say, they share in a very considerable part of it, and without repentance will do so in the punishment due unto it. And this casts the scorn of folly on Christ and the gospel, both absolutely as having neither truth nor efficacy sufficient for the end proposed by them; and comparatively, that a falsehood or lie, a diabolical invention or delusion is to be preferred before them, which is the highest provocation unto the eyes of God's glory. The latter sort quite cast off the general end of pleasing God, and living unto him. For awhile they thought that this would have brought them in some considerable satisfaction, and used the gospel to that end and purpose. But now being fallen under the power of the former degrees of apostacy, in contempt of the gospel, as that which will not afford any tolerable answer unto their expectations, they take up in the lusts and pleasures of the world, preferring them before all the promises of Christ, and despising all the threatenings denounced against those that pursue them. And of this sort of apostates we have numberless examples in the world.

(5.) Hereunto is added, a perfect hatred and contempt of such as abide constant in their adherence unto and profession of the gospel. Constant observation hath approved the saying, 'Apostata est osor sui ordinis;' great apostates have been always great persecutors in word or deed according to their power. As those who love Christ, do love all that are his, because they are his; so they that hate him, do hate all that are his, because they are his. And their hatred because it is against the whole kind, acts itself every way possible. They despise them as weak and foolish, for adhering and trusting to the things which they have relinquished, trusting to themselves, their reason, and gallantry of spirit. They are filled with revenge against them, as those who censure, judge, and condemn them as guilty of the highest villany and most desperate wickedness. They know in their hearts that they have reserves against them, as persons whom their Lord will one day judge and destroy, which makes them design, if it were possible, their utter extirpation from the face of the earth. Those who crucified Christ in his own person, did it but once, and could do so no more; these do so every day; for what is done unto any of his, for his sake, he esteemeth as done unto himself. 'Why persecutest thou me?'

(6.) These persons who proceed thus far, do always fall into a peculiar contempt of the Spirit of God, and his whole work in the dispensation of the gospel. The promise of the dispensation of the Spirit, is the especial privilege and glory of the gospel. He is sent and given in an especial manner by Jesus Christ as exalted. His whole work is to glorify and exalt Jesus Christ, and to make his mediation effectual unto the souls of men. And in the things which concern him and his work, lies the life and soul of the gospel. Hence those who apostatize from it, have a peculiar enmity against him and his work. And this usually is one of the first things wherein the fatal backslidings of men do manifest themselves. When once men 'tread under foot the Son of God, and account the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing,' as they do in the former instances, they will assuredly 'do despite unto the Spirit of grace;' Heb. x. 29. How this is done in particular, shall be considered on that place, if God will, and we

live thereunto. Under this head and degree, the sin of apostacy becomes formally irremissible.

(7.) An open profession of a detestation of the gospel, so far as it is consistent with their worldly interests and advantages, completes the soul-ruining sin we treat of. It may be they may live in such times and places, as that it would be to their secular disadvantage openly to avow their renunciation of Christ. But when that is the only curb from the declaration of themselves, the frame of their minds is esteemed for a full profession of their apostacy.

Now whereas all these things, and it may be sundry others, do concur unto this sin of apostacy, I shall conclude two things concerning it: 1. That it is a far greater sin than that of the generality of the Jews who crucified Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, as was before asserted. 2. That it is inconsistent with the holiness, righteousness, honour, and faithfulness of God, to renew such persons as are fully and openly guilty hereof unto repentance. Repentance may be given unto them in hell, with as much advantage unto the glory of God. For when men after trial and experiment, with some convictions of its truth and excellency, do obstinately reject the only remedy and relief that God hath provided for sinners, and therein do despite unto the whole blessed Trinity, and each person thereof in his peculiar interest in the dispensation and application of grace; God neither in his faithfulness will, nor in his holiness can, have any thing more to do with such presumptuous sinners in a way of mercy. He may and doth endure them for awhile in this world, and that without any visible tokens of his indignation, satisfying his justice in the spiritual judgments that are upon them; but it is only as 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,' and such 'whose damnation sleepeth not.' And these things may suffice to warn men of the danger of this evil; and they will be warnings unto all who shall consider them, who are not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and all the judgments of God, which are either impendent over, or already inflicted on a wicked apostatizing world, are calls from heaven unto a consideration of them.

Now although the generality of men seem to be secure enough from any trouble or discomposure in their minds

from the consideration of things of this nature, yet some there are who may by their own misapprehensions fall under such discouragements as may hinder them in that course of obedience which they would pursue. I shall therefore divert a little, to prevent or remove the objections which such persons make against themselves, and from whence their discouragement doth arise, adding some directions suited unto their state or condition. For,

First, Some may suppose themselves so far interested in the backsliding and apostacy described, as that the threatening denounced in the text doth belong unto them also; and that they are judicially now shut up under impenitency. For they say that they had attained unto a greater measure or degree of holiness, unto more readiness, evenness, and constancy in the duties of obedience than they do now retain. They have fearfully and wofully fallen off from a better frame, into deadness, barrenness, neglect of duties, and it may be in some instance into a sinful course, and that for many days. Hence now they fear, that lest as they are sensible that they have forsaken God and gone off from him, so he should forsake them utterly, and that they should be sealed up under impenitency.

Ans. 1. As this case too often falls out, so it is often answered; and I shall not therefore much insist upon it, nor any otherwise but as our present design and discourse is concerned therein. And I say,

(1.) It is to be granted, that all such backslidings are not only evil and sinful, but dangerous also, as to the issue and event. Whoever therefore finds himself under the power of them, or any way overtaken by them, ought not only to consider the guilt of all the particular sins and omissions of duties which they contract, but principally the whole state of their souls, and the danger they are in of being 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' For no man in such a state can have the least spiritual assurance or security, that he shall not fall totally and finally from God; and whatever persuasion he hath of that nature, it is but a deceiving presumption that will effectually promote his apostacy and ruin. For there is no word of truth, no promise of God, to assure any of his love and favour whilst they are in such a state. It is therefore unquestionably

the duty of every one who is sensible of any evil of this nature, in the frame of his heart, or course of his life, to give himself no rest therein, seeing the eternal welfare of his soul is highly in question. But,

(2.) There is a decay, a falling away from the degrees of holiness and obedience that men may have attained, and that it may be for a long season, and possibly with respect unto some especial sin which is recoverable, and which doth not cast persons under the power of it, absolutely into the threatening here recorded. What circumstances are required hereunto, and what aggravations of sin, hath been shewed in the opening of the words. Now there may be a falling away, and that great and dangerous, which yet riseth not up unto the provocation of the evil here in an especial manner intended. And I judge it may be given as a safe rule in general, that he who is spiritually sensible of the evil of his backsliding, is unquestionably in a recóverable condition; and some may be so who are not yet sensible thereof, so long as they are capable of being made so by convictions. No man is past hopes of salvation, until he is past all possibility of repentance. And no man is past all possibility of repentance, until he be absolutely hardened against all gospel convictions. Wherefore there is a recoverable backsliding. For, [1.] Christ calleth men unto such a recovery, which therefore he approves of, and will assist them therein who conscientiously apply themselves unto their duty, Rev. ii. 5. iii. 1—4. which latter instance is great in this kind. [2.] God hath promised to recover and heal such backslidings in believers; Hosea xiv. 4. And unto whom this is not encouragement sufficient to endeavour a recovery of themselves, it is to be feared they will wax worse and worse through the power of sin, until it hath full dominion over them. Yea, what pretences soever they make to keep themselves off from such endeavours, it is either unbelief or the love of sin that is the sole proper cause thereof. Wherefore,

(3.) If the backsliding, whereof men complain, from the ways of holiness and obedience, have not proceeded out of dislike unto Christ and the gospel, if they have not by the power and deceit wherewith they are accompanied, chosen any other way of duty or sin in his stead; as there is all

necessity imaginable that they should, so there is all encouragement necessary, to put them upon the diligent use of all means of a blessed recovery. Suppose their decays have befallen them, or that they have fallen into them, through the power of temptations, the deceitfulness of sin joining with their own sloth and negligence, which is the highest supposition that can be made in this kind; yet if they shall say in their hearts, that they 'will return to their former husband, for then it was better with them than now;' they had peace and much refreshment in their first ways of faith and obedience, which they will therefore return unto; as the Lord Christ calls upon them so to do, so he is ready in all the promises of the gospel to receive them upon their so doing. Only let such persons remember, that the command is urgent on them, as on Lot when he was to flee out of Sodom, and the angel said unto him, 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' There is no time of deliberation, much less of delay in this matter; it is for their souls, and the present moment wherein they are warned is the only season for their escape; and if any shall yet linger as Lot did, the Lord lay hold upon them and bring them forth by the power of his grace, that they may be delivered! What are the ways whereby this may be done, what duties such persons are with diligence to attend unto, what means they are to use, are not things which at present fall under our consideration. All that I design is to shew, that those who thus complain, are not cast under any discouragement, by this context and its exposition, from an endeavour of a recovery, wherein they will find acceptance with God.

Secondly, It may be alleged, that as to the issue of things it will be all one whether we fall from gospel holiness, or can never attain unto it; and this, say some, is our condition: for whatever we have thought of ourselves, or whatever others have thought of us upon our profession, yet we now find by experience that we have not attained the holiness which the gospel requires. For their corruptions (they say, this or that it may be in particular) are too strong for their convictions; and after they thought themselves above them, they have again been prevailed on and overcome.

They find the power of one or other lust grown so habitual unto them, that they fall again and again under the power of it, until, it may be, they have lost much of the sense of its guilt, and more of their power to resist it. And it must be acknowledged also, that this condition is spiritually dangerous, and such as (if deliverance be not obtained from) will probably end in total apostacy. To state things aright in this case, we may observe,

1. That there are three degrees in the power and prevalency of sin, and it must be inquired under which of them they are supposed to be, concerning whom this complaint is made. The first is that mentioned Rom. vii. 23. 'I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.' Where this is only, or the captivating power of sin, there are two things to be considered. (1.) That the will, in its dispositions and inclinations, is constantly fixed against the power and interest of sin, so that in all its prevalency it suffers hardship, and is sensible of its captivity. (2.) That this captivity unto the law of sin doth not reach unto the outward perpetration of sin, but only the conflict that is in the mind and affections about it. And this is a condition which no man in this world is absolutely freed from, but is in some measure or other exercised with it, even as the apostle himself was, and thereon groaned for deliverance; ver. 24. Another degree of the prevalence of sin is expressed, Rom. vi. 16. 19. 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' There is a state and prevalence of sin, wherein men being wholly under its dominion, do give up themselves unto its service willingly, notwithstanding any checks from light or conscience they meet withal. And such as these, the willing servants of sin, that yield up themselves in their affections and members of their bodies unto the obedience and service of it, we do not at present consider. Between these there is a degree of the prevalence of sin, beyond the first, yet falling short of the latter, expressed 2 Pet. ii. 19. Men are therein in some sense servants of corruption, in that they are overcome by it, and brought into bondage. They are not such as willingly, without any contest or conflict, give

up themselves unto the service of sin, but they are overcome by it, which manifests that they do in some measure strive against it. And on the other hand they go beyond those who complain they are led captives to the law of sin; for they are said to 'become servants to corruption,' which the others are not in any sense. These therefore seem to be such, and such I do intend, who notwithstanding all their light and convictions, with all the endeavours that they use, are so far under the power of some prevalent habitual lust, as to serve it in a frequent reiteration of actual sins.

2. If this be the case complained of, it is acknowledged to be a condition of no small hazard and danger. And he who is not deeply sensible hereof, is 'like him that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth on the top of a mast;' as this state is at large described with respect unto them who are given to wine, Prov. xxiii. 29—35. Wherefore, unless some remedy be found out in this case, it must be acknowledged that it will deprive men of, or keep them from, any assured interest in gospel holiness.

I must not here divert to consider in general the nature and means of the mortification of sin; I have done it already in other discourses, with the best directions for that end which I am able to propose. Unto them I do refer the persons concerned for guidance and counsel where better is not at hand. Unto what hath been so treated already I shall only add, that those who would secure an interest in gospel holiness, by a deliverance from the power of inveterate habitual corruptions, may take the ensuing directions.

First, If they have in vain attempted their own deliverance, let them not delay to acquaint some able spiritual guide with their state and condition. This sometimes hath broken, defeated, and scattered at once the forces of sin in the soul, where in its own wisdom and strength it was no way able to conflict with it. And it is the ordinance of God to this purpose; James v. 16. 'Confess your faults one to another,' &c. It was no small effect of the craft of Satan, so to abuse this ordinance of God by turning it into a necessary confession of all sin unto a priest, invested with power of absolution, which was attended with innumerable evils, and proved an effectual engine for the ruin of the souls of men, to keep them off from that benefit which the due use

of it was designed to administer unto sinners. If therefore any have found that sin hath been, and yet is too strong for them, and that that is come upon them which the wise man mentions, 'Wo unto him that is alone;' let them address themselves for advice unto such as have 'the tongue of the learned,' to speak a word in season unto them that are weary and ready to faint, and they will find relief. God will discover that evil of this kind, which men will hide to their own disadvantage. He will lay-open those festered wounds which men would cover until rottenness enter into their bones.

Secondly, The effect aimed at will never be accomplished without violence offered unto ourselves as unto all occasions of sin, namely, as to the particular corruption supposed prevalent. In this case, when known occasions of the excitation or actings of the evil complained of do occur, no deliberations or inclinations, or civil compliances, are once to be admitted. Violence and sudden executions of foretaken resolves, without any parley or debate, are to be pursued. This is the condition wherein our Saviour's advice must take place, if we intend to escape; namely, of 'pulling out a right eye, and cutting off a right hand,' Matt. v. 29, 30. which cannot be done without offering violence unto our affections and inclinations. This is the meaning of the counsel given, Prov. iv. 14, 15. 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.' The multiplication of the expressions wherein the duty charged doth consist, do intimate that in the obedience required in this particular, a resolution acted with a holy violence is required. And there are three things in this holy violence with respect unto the occasions of a prevalent corruption.

1. The mind's rejection of their first solicitations. When such seasons do befall, or are befalling any man, wherein his lust or sin hath wonted to act itself, they smile on one another, and are ready to shake hands in folly. Psal. l. 18. Prov. xxiii. 31. And sundry things will present themselves unto the mind to render the occasion necessary, or at least not dangerous. But if all insinuation of that kind be not immediately rejected, without parley or delay, the soul probably will be again entangled and overcome.

2. A stated satisfaction concerning the folly of reserves,

although the occasion should be complied withal or embraced, so as that the mind will hear no more of them under any pretence whatever. Such reserves will offer themselves, that although a man proceed so far, or so far in the gratification of his present inclinations, yet he will put a stop unto, or avoid what they may lead unto. When the mind is fully possessed of the deceitfulness of the heart in this matter, it will see its own folly in listening after such false promises or reserves, and reject the first thoughts of them with indignation.

3. Local mutation, or avoiding the place itself, or society and company, with a holy force put upon the affections, where such occasions are offered. This is that which is so expressed and pressed on us in the place before mentioned, Prov. iv. 14, 15.

These things belong unto that holy violence which men are to use unto themselves, and must use if ever they intend to be freed from the power of an habitually prevalent corruption. And those who judge their deliverance not to be worth this watchfulness and care, will live and die under the power of sin.

Thirdly, Constancy in private prayer against the power of such a corruption. This is all the way a man hath to deal with God about such an evil. For such things are to be thought and spoken, such circumstances to be insisted on, and such pleas to be used, as are not meet to be communicated to or with others. And for the most part it will be found, that constant, earnest, faithful private prayer, and any strong corruption, will be like Moses and Amalek. When Moses's hands were down, Amalek prevailed; but when they were lifted up, Israel had the upper hand. And if a man engages into especial prayer, in opposition unto any sin or corruption, whatever he thinks of his own resolutions, whatever confidence he hath in his purposes, as he begins to fail or faint in the constancy or fervency of that duty, so his sin gets strength in him, and will not fail to attempt him successfully on the next occasion. Nor will the utmost effect of any man's wisdom, or care, or ability, work out his deliverance in this case, without a conscientious attendance unto, and discharge of their duty.

Sundry other things of an alike nature unto these might

be insisted on, but that I must not too far digress from my principal design. This I thought meet to interpose for the direction of such as may be kept off from a successful endeavour 'to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.'

CHAP. XIII.

Directions to avoid the power of a prevailing apostacy.

UNTO the warnings given in the precedent chapter some directions may be added, perhaps not unuseful unto them who would be preserved from the occasions, causes, and danger of the apostacy thus far inquired into. For although, as hath been declared, a watchful attendance unto all gospel duties, and a vigorous exercise of all gospel graces in general are required unto our preservation, yet there are some things which have an especial respect unto the present state of the causes and circumstances of the evil insisted on, which ought in an especial manner to be remembered. And that things of this nature are by many despised, is no argument why we should not be diligent in our attendance unto them. For if they are such things as the Scripture prescribeth in the like cases, the contempt of them proceeds only from that pride and security which are no small part of the apostacy complained of.

Our first direction of this kind is, that we should all labour for a true real sense of the concernment of the glory of God in this matter, and what is our duty with respect thereunto. Where this is not, men are under the power of that security which is the broad way and wide gate leading into apostacy. Yea, where this is not the first and principal thing wherewith we are affected in any evil that falls out in the world, our hearts are not upright in what we profess.

When God threatened to disinherit the Israelites, and destroy the whole congregation as one man in the wilderness, because of their provoking rebellion; that wherewith Moses, in all the circumstances of his relation unto them and interest in them was affected withal, was, the concernment of the glory and name of God therein; Numb. xiv. 13—18. And it was so with Joshua in the sin and punishment of the same

people. 'What wilt thou do,' saith he, 'unto thy great name?' Josh. vii. 9. words which have been made a public derision in the days wherein we live.

We cannot but have thoughts about these things, for they are the common subject of many men's discourse. But if our thoughts about them are confined unto a narrow compass, and so that it be well with us and some few others in whom we are peculiarly concerned, the evil that is come on the world in other places, is lightly set by; if we are sensible of no interest of the glory of God, of the honour of Christ, and the gospel therein, or are regardless of them, we are scarce likely to be delivered from that fatal issue whereunto all these things are in an open tendency.

Is it nothing unto us, that so many nations in the world where the profession of the gospel, and an avowed subjection of soul and conscience unto Jesus Christ, did flourish for some ages, are now utterly overrun with Mahometanism, paganism, and atheism? Do we suppose these things are fallen out by chance, or come to pass by a fatal revolution of affairs, such as all things in this world are obnoxious unto? Did ever any nation or people under heaven lose the gospel as unto its profession, who did not first reject it as unto its power, purity, and obedience? And is not the glory of God, is not the honour of Christ, peculiarly concerned herein?

Is it nothing unto us, that innumerable souls who yet continue to make an outward profession of the name of Christ, have so degenerated from the mystery, holiness, and worship of the gospel, as to provoke the holy God to give them up for so many generations, unto the most woful bondage and slavery, that ever any of the children of men were cast under from the foundation of the world, without the least hopes or appearance of relief? And is it not to be bewailed, that such is the power of that apostacy which brought all this evil upon them, as that they have not to this day accepted of the punishment of their sins, nor been bettered by all that they have undergone? And doth not that holy name whereby we are called suffer in these things? Is it not on their account evil spoken of? For do not the miseries, the long-continued woful calamities, and oppressions of innumerable multitudes of great nations, outwardly professing the Christian religion, become a snare to the world, and a temptation

against the truth of the gospel, and the power of Jesus Christ? The Jews themselves are not left unto more distresses, nor more destitute of any pledges of divine protection, nor are more unreformed under their miseries, than many who are called Christians, upon the account of their apostacy from the gospel. It is true, great distresses and sore persecutions may befall the church in its best state and condition; but then doth God so dispose of all things, as that their trials shall evidently tend both unto his own glory and their spiritual advantage who are exercised with them. And in the issue the gospel itself shall never be a loser by the suffering of its sincere professors. But in those horrible judgments which have befallen many parts of the apostatized Christian world, nothing offereth itself unto our minds but what is matter of lamentation and temptation.

Is it nothing to us, that the greatest number of those who are called Christians and enjoy prosperity in the world, do live in open idolatry, to the unspeakable scandal of Christian religion, and imminent danger unto themselves of eternal ruin? nothing, that so many do openly renounce the humble, meek spirit of Christ and the gospel, endeavouring to persecute, ruin, and destroy other Christians, perhaps better than themselves, because they cannot captivate their souls and consciences, in obedience unto their impositions? nothing, to see and hear of all those dreadful effects of this apostacy in all manner of outrageous sins that the world is filled withal?

Certainly if we are not greatly affected with these things, if our souls mourn not in secret about them, if we are not solicitous about the small remainders of the interest of truth and holiness in the world, we are in no small danger ourselves of being, one time or other, carried away with the deluge.

If we are sensible of the concernment of the glory of God in these things, it may not be amiss to consider what is our duty with respect thereunto.

1. And the first thing required of us, is, that we mourn in secret, for that sad issue which the profession of Christianity is come unto in the world. God puts an especial mark on them who mourn for the prevalency of sin, and the apostacy of the church in any season; Ezek. ix. 4. Neither will he

have regard unto any others, when he comes to execute judgments on ungodly apostates. Men may suffer with them, with whom they will not sin. For where we are unconcerned for the sins of men, we shall not be so in their sufferings. It is therefore those alone who, out of a sense of the dishonour of God, and compassion towards the souls of perishing sinners, do sigh and cry over these abominations, that shall be either preserved from those public calamities, wherein they may issue, or be comfortably supported under them. And there is nothing of a more ominous presage that things are yet waxing worse, than that general regardlessness about them that is among the best of us. Whose 'eyes run down with waters because men keep not the law?' Who doth sufficiently bewail the decays of faith, truth, and holiness, that are in the earth? Most men (like Gallio) either 'care for none of these things,' or at best, design to save their own houses in the general conflagration. Many measure all things by their own advantage, and can see nothing amiss in the profession of religion, but only in the complaints that any things are so. And although the degeneracy of Christianity in the present professors of it be grown a common theme in the mouths of most, yet very few are affected with it in a due manner in their hearts.

2. It is in this state of things required of us to pray continually, pleading those promises which are recorded in the word of God, for the restoration of the pristine glory, power, and purity of Christian religion. This was the way and means whereby the church was recovered of old; and the same duty is still enjoined unto us; Isa. lxii. 6, 7. And hereunto are all our present hopes reduced. There is nothing too hard for God. If he will work herein, none shall let him. Things are not gone beyond his cure. He can send peace, and truth, and righteousness from above, and cause them to prevail on the earth. Were all things left absolutely unto the wills of men, in that depraved state whereunto they are arrived in the world, nothing but an increase of overspreading abominations might be expected. Sovereign and effectual grace can yet give relief, and nothing else can so do. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. But for all these will God

be sought unto. And constancy in this duty for others, out of a deep sense of the concernment of the glory of God, and zeal for the honour of the gospel, is the most effectual means of our own deliverance and preservation.

3. Constancy in our testimony against the prevalency of this apostacy, is required of us. And hereof there are two parts. (1.) An open avowed profession of, and contending for, the faith and truth of the gospel. The public contempt and scorn that is by a prevalent vogue cast on some important evangelical truths, is ready to discourage many from the owning and profession of them. Men, for the most part, have so many things to take into consideration before they will undertake the defence of the truth, that they can find no season for it, whilst noisome errors are vented every day with confidence and diligence. It is therefore now (if ever) a time for all those in whose hearts are the ways of God, to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.' And if either sloth, or self-love, or carnal fears, or earthly ambitious designs, do betray any into a neglect of their duty in this matter, it will at one time or other give them disquietment and trouble. But, (2.) Exemplary holiness, righteousness, and fruitfulness in good works, belong unto this testimony against the prevalent apostacy which is required of us. As this is our constant duty at all times, so the progress of the fatal evil complained of, renders the doubling of our diligence herein at present necessary, and puts a lustre on it.

Secondly, Those who would be preserved in such a season, must keep a due and careful watch over their own hearts, with respect unto their duty and danger. For although temptations do abound, and those attended with all sorts of circumstances increasing their efficacy, and the outward means and causes of this evil are multiplied, yet the beginnings of all men's spiritual declensions are in their own hearts and spirits. For the different effects that these things have upon the minds and lives of men, is principally from themselves. As they are careful, diligent, and watchful over themselves in a way of duty on the one hand, or slothful, careless, negligent, on the other, so are they preserved or prevailed against. The advice therefore I intend, is that given by the Holy Ghost in this case, Prov. iv. 23. 'Keep

thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;' or, as it is emphatically expressed in the original, 'above all keeping, keep thy heart.' The greatest exercise of men in the world, is about keeping what they have, what they esteem their own; wherewith the desire of adding unto it, is of the same nature. What belongeth hereunto, what care, what watchfulness, what diligence, what exercise of their utmost wisdom and industry, all men know; unless it be such as by the power of their lusts are given up unto prodigality and profuseness. But the care and diligence in keeping of our hearts (the Holy Ghost being judge) ought to exceed whatever of that kind is employed about other things. And it is too evident, that there is much want of this wisdom amongst us in the world. Of all things, the least diligence is used by many in keeping of their hearts. So they can safeguard their other concerns, the heart may be left to take its own course. Yea, the heart is never so much neglected usually, nor more lost, than in the use it is put unto in keeping other things; for whilst it is employed to keep our lives, to keep the world, and the things of it, it is lost itself in worldliness, covetousness, carnal wisdom, negligence of holy duties, and barrenness in the fruits of righteousness. That this is no good bargain, that nothing is got hereby, yea, that all will be lost by it at last, heart and world and every thing wherein we are concerned, the Holy Ghost plainly intimates in this direction, wherein we are commanded above all things to keep our hearts. And we are not only laid under this command, but a cogent reason is added to enforce our obedience; 'for out of it are the issues of life.' Hereon do all events depend; the heart being kept, the whole course of our life here will be according unto the mind of God, and the end of it will be the enjoyment of him hereafter. This being neglected, life will be lost, both here as unto obedience, and hereafter as unto glory. This therefore is that which in the first place is to be applied unto the present case. Would any not be overtaken with the power and prevalency of any of the causes of apostacy mentioned before, let them look well unto their own hearts, seeing that from thence are the issues of life.

By the 'heart' the Scripture understandeth all the faculties of our souls, as they are an entire rational principle of

all moral and spiritual operations; and so do we also. The preservation of them in their due order, acting in all things according unto their distinct powers and the duty of the whole soul with respect unto God, is that which is intended by this keeping of the heart; and hereunto with reference unto the present duty sundry things do belong in an especial manner. As,

1. That the heart be kept awake and attentive unto its own deceitfulness. The wise man tells us, that 'he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool;' Prov. xxviii. 26. The beginning of all security (which is an assured entrance into all evil) lies in men's leaving their hearts unto themselves, and trusting in them. He is no wise man (the Holy Ghost being judge) who, after so many instructions and warnings given us in the Scripture of the deceitfulness of our hearts, or the deceitfulness of that sin which is bound up in them (which is all one), will carelessly trust them with their eternal concernments. The apostle Peter did so once upon a strong confidence that his heart would not fail him; but we know what was the issue of it. It is apt to be so with most men in this matter. They think and do really judge, that if all men should fall off and forsake the gospel, either wholly or as unto the degrees in obedience which they have attained, yet they would not so do. But all things are filled with visible examples of their disappointments. There are no apostates but once thought they would not be so. For we speak only of them who had light into and conviction of their duty, and who had therefore necessarily resolutions to continue therein. Wherefore, a constant watchful jealousy over our own hearts as to their deceitfulness, their readiness to be imposed on, and secret pretences to countenance themselves in compliance with temptations, is the foundation of all other duties necessary unto our perservation.

Even this also is by some despised. They know of no deceitfulness in their own hearts, nor think there is any such thing in the hearts of others. They cannot but acknowledge that there is mutual deceit enough amongst mankind in the world; but that there should be deceit and treachery in men's hearts with respect unto themselves, their own actions, duties, and ways; with respect unto God and their own eternal condition, that they cannot appre-

hend. For, what or whom should a man trust unto, if he may not safely repose his confidence in his own heart, that it will be always true unto its spiritual and eternal interest? Happy men, were such apprehensions as these to be the rule of their present duty or future judgment. But is it not possible there may be in the hearts of men a blind self-love, so far predominant as practically to impose false apprehensions and notions of things upon the mind and affections, with respect unto sin and duty? Is there no disorder in the faculties of our souls, nor confusion in their operations thereon? Are there no remainders of sin inseparable from them in this life, accompanied with all manner of spiritual deceitfulness? no corrupt reasonings for the procrastination of the most important duties? no inclinations unto undue precedences and presumptions? no vanity or uncertainty in the mind? Or can these things (with the like innumerable) be supposed without any deceit in them or accompanying of them? What one said of old to the Druids,

> Solis nosse Deos et cœli Numina vobis
> Aut solis nescire datum.———

may be applied unto the men of this persuasion; either they alone know the state of the heart of man with respect unto God, evangelical obedience, and their own eternal interest, or they alone are ignorant thereof. Until therefore we have more satisfaction in this novel pretended discovery, we dare not cease the pressing of men to be diligently attentive unto the deceits of their own hearts. If this be neglected, we shall labour in vain, whatever else we do. Blessed is he who thus feareth always. This will make men carefully and conscientiously avoid all occasions of all things, whether in their inward frames or outward practice, that may on any account have a tendency unto a declension from the gospel. A bold, hazardous, careless frame of spirit, venturing on all companies and temptations, complying with vanities and profane communication, offering itself with a fearless confidence unto ways of seduction, through 'the cunning sleights of men that lie in wait to deceive,' is that which hath ruined innumerable professors. Self-distrust, humility, fear of offending, with the like soul-preserving graces, will be kept up unto exercise only where men are

awake unto the consideration of the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

2. We must keep our heart awake and attentive unto its help and relief. And this lies only in Christ Jesus the captain of our salvation. After all Peter's confidence, it was the interposition of Christ alone that preserved him from utter ruin; 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.' And if any can once prevail so far as to deter men from looking for all spiritual help and relief from Christ, for daily supplies of grace and strength from him alone; from a continual application unto him, for directing, assisting, preserving, establishing grace (which they variously attempt), there is no need to fear, but they will easily follow them into whatever else either they, or Satan, or the world shall have a mind to draw them. But in all our discourses we proceed on other principles. We look on Jesus Christ as the spring and fountain of all grace, as he who alone is able to preserve us in faith and obedience, and doth communicate supplies of effectual grace unto believers for that purpose. Unto him, therefore, are we to make our applications continually by faith and prayer for our preservation, as we are directed, Heb. iv. 15, 16. It is he alone who can 'keep us from the hour of temptation which is come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth;' Rev. iii. 10. Whosoever therefore would be kept from the power of the temptations unto apostacy, which every way encompass us, and threaten to bear down all before them, let them keep their hearts continually attentive unto their only help and relief. Those who have not taken in a sense of their danger, will see little reason to concern themselves in these directions. But as for such as are affected with the visible ruin of multitudes, and their own apparent hazard, from prevailing causes and innumerable occasions thereof, whose eyes are in any measure opened to see the general inclination that is in the world unto a relinquishment of all the principal concerns of the gospel, by what various ways that inclination is furthered, followed, and pursued, will not think it unneedful to be minded of a help and refuge whereunto they may betake themselves and be preserved.

3. Let the heart be kept attentive unto its own frames,

its progress or decays in holiness. How secret, and even ofttimes imperceptible, the beginnings of spiritual declensions are in many, with the reasons and causes thereof, hath been declared in our exposition of Heb. iv. 12, 13. whither the reader is referred. I shall here only offer, that he who in such a season as that which is passing over us, doth not often call himself unto an account how things stand with him as to the inner man; what is the state of his spiritual life, whether his faith and love do thrive or decay, whether God or the world get ground in his affections, will be exposed unto more dangers than it may be he is readily able to deliver himself from. These things are all of them useful, yea, needful unto the course of our obedience at all times. That which is here intended is, their exercise and discharge with respect unto the evil and danger under consideration. When we have done the utmost of our duty, we shall have cause to rejoice in the grace of God if we are preserved and delivered. But if we be found slothful, negligent, and secure, what hopes can we have that we shall withstand the evil that doth on every side beset us? There is not any way of fraud or force wherein we either are not or may not be assaulted. The secret ways whereby this apostacy puts forth its efficacy, are so various as not to be enumerated. The current, furthered by the winds of all sorts of temptations, lies strongly against us. New accessions are made unto it every day. New pretences against the truths and holiness of the gospel are sought out and made use of. By some they are secretly undermined, by others openly despised; and the hand of Satan is in all these things. If we should now neglect a watchful care over our own hearts, and a diligent attendance unto all means of their preservation in soundness of doctrine and holiness of life, what assurance can we have that we shall finally escape?

Having premised these directions in general, those which ensue must have a particular respect unto some of the especial ways and means whereby this declension hath been carried on and promoted, peculiarly such as the present age and season are most obnoxious unto. And because this discourse is drawn forth to a length beyond my first design, I shall name a few things only, to intimate of what sort those

directions are which might be more largely insisted on. And two only shall be named; wherefore,

Thirdly, Take heed of resting in or trusting unto the outward privileges of the church, and a participation of the dispensation of the ordinances of the gospel therein. It is known what various apprehensions as to the especial ways of outward solemn worship and the state of the church there are among all sorts of men. But whereas all men do approve of and adhere unto one church-state or other, one way of worship or other, I intend no one more than another in particular, but would speak unto all with respect unto that way which themselves do approve and practise. And it was before declared, how greatly the world was deluded by a pretence of them. And we may not think to excuse the necessity of watchfulness in this matter, because all the good things of the church, and all the ordinances of the gospel were then abused, corrupted, and defiled, whereas we now all of us, in our own apprehensions, enjoy their administration in purity, according unto the institution of Christ. For they are all of them no less liable to be abused in this kind, when duly administered, than when most corrupted. Yea, in some cases they are more apt so to be, seeing there is a greater appearance of reason why we should place our confidence in them.

It is indeed an especial mercy for any to be intrusted with the privileges of the church, and institutions of the gospel. Yea, it is the greatest outward dignity and preeminence that any can be advanced unto in this world, however by the most it be lightly set by. Theodosius, one of the greatest emperors that ever were in the world, affirmed, that he esteemed his being a member of the church a greater dignity than his imperial crown. And although the ruin of the Jews arose principally from their carnal confidence in their spiritual or church privileges, yet the apostle doth acknowledge that they had great pre-eminence and advantage, and might have had great profit thereby; Rom. iii. 1, 2. ix. 4. And theirs must be granted more excellent in every kind, who enjoy that administration of holy things, in comparison whereof that committed unto the Jews had neither beauty nor glory; 2 Cor. iii. 10. By whomsoever therefore these things are despised or neglected, under

whatever pretences they countenance themselves, they are utter strangers unto gospel holiness. For what holiness can there be where men live in an open disobedience unto the commands of Christ, and a neglect of the use of those means which he hath appointed to beget and preserve it in our souls? Nothing therefore must be spoken to take off from the excellency, dignity, and necessity of the privileges and ordinances of the church, when we would call off men from placing that confidence in them which may tend unto their disadvantage. And if persons can find no medium between rejecting all the ordinances of the gospel, and trusting unto the outward performance or celebration of them, they have nothing but their own darkness, pride, and unbelief to ascribe the ruin of their souls unto.

Again, There is not any thing in the whole course of our obedience wherein the continual exercise of faith and spiritual wisdom, with diligence and watchfulness, is more indispensably required, than it is unto the due use and improvement of gospel privileges and ordinances; for there is no other part of our duty, whereon our giving glory to God, and the eternal concern of our own souls do more eminently depend. And he is a spiritually thriving Christian who knows how duly to improve gospel institutions of worship, and doth so accordingly. For they are the only ordinary outward means whereby the Lord Christ communicates of his grace unto us, and whereby we immediately return love, praise, thanks, and obedience unto him; in which spiritual intercourse the actings of our spiritual life principally do consist, and whereon by consequence its growth doth depend. It is therefore certain, that our growth or decay in holiness, our steadfastness in or apostacy from profession, are greatly influenced by the use or abuse of these privileges.

That therefore which in compliance with my present design I intend, is only a warning that we do not rest in these things, the name, title, privilege, and outward observance of them; seeing so many have thereby been deluded into security and apostacy. Some there are (and of them not a few), all whose religion consists in going to church, and abiding there during the celebration of that sort of worship which they approve of. Herewith they sa-

tisfy their consciences as unto all that they have to do with God, especially if they are admitted unto a participation of the sacraments in the appointed seasons. And many others, it is to be feared, content themselves with a bare hearing of the word, and do treat their consciences into a quietness and security thereby. It were otherwise impossible that among so great multitudes as crowd after the preaching of the word, so few should be wrought over unto sincere and universal obedience. But I intend those in particular who make a profession of giving themselves up unto gospel obedience, and are thereon made partakers of all gospel privileges according to the rule. Let them take heed that they do not too much rest in, nor too much trust unto, these outward things; for so they may do sundry ways unto their disadvantage.

1. Men may herein deceive themselves by spiritual gifts, which may be reckoned in the first place among the privileges of the church. Some rest in the gifts of others, and the satisfaction they receive thereby. For by the use and exercise of them men's affections may be greatly moved, as also temporary faith and evanid joy be greatly excited. These things, it is to be feared, some live upon, without farther care after a spring of living water in themselves. Others may rest in their own gifts, their light, knowledge, ability to pray or speak of the things of God. But it is the design of the apostle, in the context before insisted on, to declare, that the most eminent spiritual gifts, with all their effects, either in the souls or lives of them who are made partakers of them, or in the church for edification, will not secure any persons from total apostacy; so also some shall be utterly rejected at the last day, who were able to plead their prophesying and casting out devils in the name of Christ, and that in his name they had 'done many wondrous works;' Matt. vii. 22, 23. And therefore, when his disciples (who were true, but as yet weak believers) were greatly affected, and it may be lifted up, with the success they had in casting out of devils in his name, he recalls them from any confidence therein, as unto their eternal concernment, unto a trust in God's free electing grace, with the fruits thereof; Luke x. 20. And the reason hereof is, because these gifts have no inseparable relation unto any of the es-

pecial and peculiar causes of salvation. That which seemeth to be of any difficulty, is, that they are an especial fruit of the mediation of Christ, purchased by his death, given into his power upon his resurrection, and first communicated on his ascension. But all that followeth from hence, is, that they are good and holy in themselves, and designed unto good and holy ends or uses, namely, the confirmation of the gospel and edification of the church. But it doth not thence follow that they are saving unto them that do receive them, unless they are accompanied with especial grace towards them, and holy obedience in them, from both which they are separable. It is therefore greatly incumbent on all those who have received of these spiritual gifts, to take care they be enlivened and acted by especial grace. For if they are not careful they will give them a pretence and apprehension of what they have not, and set a greater lustre upon what they have, than it doth deserve. For in their actings, because the objects of them are spiritual and heavenly things, the same with that of especial grace, men are apt to suppose that grace is exercised when it may be far from them; and as to the profession that men make, these gifts will set it off with that beauty as shall render it very acceptable unto others, and very well-pleasing unto themselves. Both these tend evidently unto the ruin of the souls of men, if not wisely managed and improved. Wherefore, by the way, to help us unto a right judgment in this matter, we may observe one certain difference between the operations of spiritual gifts which are solitarily so on the one hand, and saving grace on the other. Gifts have their especial works which they are confined unto, according as their especial nature is. In them they act vigorously, out of them they influence not the soul at all. But the work of saving grace is universal, equally respecting all times, occasions, seasons, and duties. And although it may be acted more eminently at one time than another, in one instance of duty than another, yet it enliveneth and disposeth the heart alike unto all obedience. But of the difference that is between spiritual gifts and saving grace, as also concerning their whole nature and use, I shall, God assisting, treat at large in another discourse. At present I intend only this caution, that men countenance not them-

selves by them, nor resolve a peace (or rather security) into their exercise, under real spiritual decays of grace and obedience.

2. Too high an estimation of any peculiar way of worship is apt to entice the minds of some unto a hurtful confidence in these things. Having an apprehension that they alone have attained unto the right way of gospel worship, and the administration of its ordinances, and that perhaps on such accounts, as wherein they are eminently deceived, they begin first greatly to value themselves, and then to despise all others, and, if they can, to persecute them. This insensibly works them unto a trust in that which they esteem so excellent, and that unto an open neglect of things of a greater weight and moment. Thus is it not unusual to see persons, who are under the power of some singular opinion and practice in religion, to make one thing almost their whole business; the measure of other things and persons the rule of communion and of all sincere love; to value and esteem themselves and others according unto their embracing or not embracing of that opinion. There is here something of that which God complains of in the prophet; Isa. lxv. 5. And it were to be wished, that such principles and practices were not visibly accompanied with a decay of love, humility, meekness, self-diffidence, condescension, and zeal in other things; seeing where it is so, let men's outward profession be what it will, the plague of apostacy is begun. Wherefore, although we ought greatly to prize, and to endeavour after the true order of the church of Christ, the purity of worship, and regular administration of ordinances, yet let us take heed that we prize not ourselves too much on what we have attained; for if we do so, we shall be very apt to countenance ourselves in other neglects thereby, which will certainly bring us into a spiritual sickness and declension. And one way or other there is an undue confidence placed in these outward privileges, when either any or all of the things ensuing are found among us.

1. A neglect of private duties. This ruinous event never falls out among professors, but it proceeds either from an over-fulness of the world and its occasions, or the prevalency of some predominant lust, or a sinful resting in, or trusting unto, the duties of public worship. When all these concur,

(unless God effectually awaken the soul), it is in a perishing condition. In particular, when men are satisfied, as unto religious worship, with that which is public or in communion with others, so as to countenance themselves in a neglect of the duties of their private retirements, they are in a high road unto apostacy.

2. The indulgence of any private lust, unto the satisfaction of the flesh. This great defect in the power of godliness, is frequently countenanced by strictness in the form thereof. And a great effect it is of the deceitfulness of sin, when it can delude the minds of men, to justify themselves in any one sin, with the names, titles, reputation, and privileges of the church, or the ordinances whereof they are made partakers: and the secret efficacy of this deceit is not easy to be detected.

3. It is so also when a loose and careless frame in our walking is indulged unto on the same account. It is hard indeed to know directly whence this is come to pass, that so many professors of the gospel should give up themselves unto a negligent and careless walk; but that it is so come to pass is certain. There is no truth more acknowledged than that a strict and close walk with God, an attendance thereunto on all occasions with diligence and circumspection, with a continual conscientious fear of sin, is indispensably required unto acceptable evangelical obedience or holiness. Yet so it is, that many professors walk with that looseness and carelessness, that venturous boldness with respect unto the occasions of sinning, that liberty or rather licentiousness of conversation, as are utterly inconsistent therewithal. As there are many causes hereof, so I fear this may be one among them, that they too much satisfy themselves with their interest in the church and its privileges, and with their observance of public worship and the ordinances thereof, according to their respective stations and capacities.

Wherefore, the sum of this direction is, that if we would be preserved from the prevalency of the present apostacy, we must have a strict regard unto our principles and practice, with respect unto the privileges of the church and ordinances of gospel worship. If we neglect or despise them, we cast off the yoke of Christ, and have no ground to look for his acceptance of us, or concernment in us. It is but

folly for them to pretend a hope in his mercy, who defy his authority. And if, on the other hand, we so rest in them as to countenance ourselves in any of the evils mentioned, we shall succeed into their room, who, under the name and pretence of the church and its privileges, fell into an open apostacy from Christ and the gospel. For the same causes will produce the same effect in us as they did in them. There is a middle way between these extremes, which whoso are guided into, will find rest and peace unto their souls. And this is no other but an humble, careful, conscientious improvement of them all unto their proper ends. And it may not be amiss to name some of those things whereby we may know whether our hearts are upright, and rightly disposed in the use of gospel ordinances. And we may judge of ourselves herein;

1. If our hearts are bettered by them; or humbled for it if they are not. Their end, with respect unto us, is to excite and put forth all grace into exercise. When therefore we find faith and love, delight in God, longing after an increase of grace and holiness; with a detestation of sin, fruitfulness in good works and all duties of obedience, joy in spiritual things, self-abasement, and admiration of grace stirred up in us by them; our hearts need not condemn us as to want of sincerity in these duties, though we are sensible of many weaknesses and imperfections. And whereas through the power of corruptions and temptations, through the weakness of the flesh and prevalency of unbelief, we come sometimes short of a sensible experience of this effect on our souls by and under them, there may yet remain a relieving evidence of some sincerity in what we do. And this is, if rejecting all other pretences and prejudices, we charge ourselves alone with our unprofitableness, and be humbled in a sense thereof. Want hereof hath been the reason why some have rejected the ordinances of the gospel as dead and useless, and others have grown formal, careless, and barren under the enjoyment of them. When all veils and coverings shall be taken away and destroyed, these things will appear to be the fruits of pride, and the deceitfulness of sin.

2. It is so when in the dispensation of the ordinances, spiritual things are realized and made nigh unto us. When in the preaching of the word we find Jesus Christ 'evidently

set forth as crucified before our eyes,' Gal iii. 1. when the form of the things delivered is brought upon our minds, Rom. vi. 17. when we do as it were feel and handle the word of life, and the things hoped for have some kind of subsistence given them in our souls, as Heb. xi. 1. then are we exercised in a due manner in this part of our obedience. To this purpose our apostle discourseth, Rom. x. 6—8. The word as preached, and other ordinances, do not direct us unto things afar off; but bring the Lord Christ, with all the benefits of his mediation, into our hearts. But if we content ourselves with empty light, with unaffecting notions of spiritual things, if we rest satisfied with the outward performance of our own duty and that of other men, we have just cause to fear that our hearts are not right in the sight of God in this matter.

3. When we find that a conscientious attendance on all the ordinances of instituted worship doth quicken our diligence and watchfulness unto all other duties of obedience that are required of us, we are conversant in them in a due manner. When under a pretence of them, and a mistaken satisfaction in them, men countenance themselves in the neglect of other duties, how way is made for farther apostacy from holiness, hath been declared. Wherefore there can be no greater evidence of our due attendance unto them, than when we are excited, quickened, enlarged, and confirmed by them, unto and in all the ways of universal obedience. Those therefore who most conscientiously make use of church privileges and gospel ordinances, are they whose hearts are most engaged unto all other duties by them.

Lastly, It is an evidence of the same importance when we have that experience of Christ and his grace in the administration of gospel ordinances according unto his will, as that we are strengthened hereby to suffer for him and them, when we are called thereunto. The time will come when neither mere light and conviction of truth, nor the gifts of the ministry, will secure men unto their profession. But he who hath tasted how gracious Christ is in the ways of his appointment, will not easily be removed from his resolution of following him withersoever he goeth.

Fourthly, Take heed of the infection of national vices. What I intend thereby, hath been before declared. And this

caution is most necessary when they are most prevalent among any people. For commonness will take off a sense of their guilt, and countenance will insensibly take away shame. Besides, when some go out unto an open excess, others are apt to justify themselves in vain practices and sinful miscarriages, because they rise not up unto the same height of provocations with them. This makes lesser vanities in habits, attires, pleasures, mispense of time in talking-houses, excess in eating and drinking, corrupt communication and careless boldness in common converses, whereby persons tread in the steps, and sometimes on the very heels of the predominant sins of the place and age, so to abound among us. Some openly shew what they have a mind to be at, if they durst; and that it is more reputation and the power of convictions, than the love of gospel holiness that restrains them from running forth into the same excess of riot with others. Israel of old dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations. And the remnant of Jacob is to be so in the midst, in the bowels of many people, as to be a blessing unto them, Micah v. 8. not to be corrupted by them. If professors will so immerse themselves into the body of the people as insensibly to learn their manners, they will be carried down the stream with them into perdition. And the danger hereof is beyond what most men conceive. Grace was but sparingly administered unto the community of the people under the old testament; and therefore, after giving of the law, God would not trust them to live among other people, nor other people to live among them, as knowing how unable they were to withstand the temptations of conformity unto them. Hereon he appointed that all the nations should be utterly extirpated where they were to inhabit, that 'they should not learn their customs;' Lev. xviii. 30. The neglect of this wisdom of God, the transgression of his will herein, by mixing themselves with other nations, and learning their manners, was that which proved their ruin. Under the gospel there is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit; God now intrusts all that are called unto the obedience of it, to live in the midst of all nations under heaven; yet he so doth it, as to warn them of their danger thereby, and to require them to stand upon their guard herein continually. This is that part of true religion which

the apostle James calls the 'keeping of ourselves unspotted from the world;' chap. i. 27. Most men think it enough, that no more can be required of them nor expected from them, than that they wallow not in the mire and pollutions of it. If their practice be free from actual open sins, they care not what spots of a worldly conversation are upon them; but they know not what will be the end thereof.

It may be it will be said, that unless we do conform ourselves in some things unto the customs that are prevalent among us, as in habit and fashion, and way of converse, we shall be despised in the world, and neither we nor ours be of any regard.

I answer, 1. That I am not contending about small things, nor prescribing modes of attire, or manner of deportment unto any. There is none who doth more despise the placing of religion in clothes, in gestures, in the refusal of civil and just respects, than I do; nor have I any severity in my thoughts against a distinction in these things among persons according to their degrees and conditions in the world, though apparently there be an excess in all sorts herein. But that which I intend, is, a compliance with the world in those things which border on, and make some kind of representation of, the predominant vices of the place and age wherein we live. And if you think you shall be despised if you come behind the rest of your rank and quality in the world in these things, still you will be so unless you come up unto them in all abominations, 1 Pet. iv. 34. and whether it be fit to relinquish God, and Christ, and the gospel, all holiness and morality, to have the friendship of the world, judge ye. And, 2. Be sure to outgo them in fixed honesty, kindness, benignity, usefulness, meekness, moderation of spirit, charity, bowels of compassion, readiness to help and relieve all men according unto your power, and you will quickly find, even in this world, how little you are concerned in that contempt of the vilest part of mankind, whereof you seem to be afraid.

Fifthly, Carefully avoid all those miscarriages of professors which alienate the minds of men from the gospel, and countenance them in the contempt of the profession of it. Some of them we have mentioned before, and many of the like nature might be added unto them. As the scandalous

profligate lives of those in general who are called Christians, gives that offence unto Jews, Mahometans, and Gentiles all the world over, that hardens them unto a contempt and detestation of Christianity, and hath brought the whole matter of religion in the world unto force and the sword; so the miscarriages of the strictest sort of professors do greatly countenance others in their dislike of, and enmity against, the power of godliness, which they profess. And so far as we continue in them, we have a share in the guilt of the present defection. Not to insist on particulars; the things of this nature that are charged on them, may be reduced unto three heads.

1. Want of love and unity among themselves.
2. Want of usefulness and kindness towards all.
3. Spiritual pride and censoriousness, or rash judging of other men.

These are the things which are commonly charged on some professors. And although, it may be, they are but few who are guilty of all or any of these things, at least not as they are charged and reproached by others, yet they may all learn what in an especial manner to avoid, that they give no advantage unto those who seek for it, and would be glad of it. It is our duty, by a watchful holy conversation in all things, to 'put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,' and so universally to approve our sincerity unto God and men, that whereas we are, or may be at any time evil spoken of as evil-doers, they may be ashamed, beholding our good conversation in Christ, and glorify God in the day of visitation. This is the law that we have brought ourselves under, not to fret and fume, and in our minds seek for revenge, when we are traduced and evil spoken of; but by a 'patient continuance in well-doing,' to overcome all the evil that the malice of hell or the world can cast upon us. And if we like not this law and rule, we had best relinquish our profession, for it is indispensably required of all the disciples of Jesus Christ. And he whose heart is confirmed by grace to do well whilst he is evil spoken of, will find that present satisfaction in a sense of his acceptation with Christ, as to make him say, 'This yoke is easy, and this burden light.' Especially ought we carefully to avoid the things mentioned and appearances of them, whereby public offence is taken, and advantage

made by evil men to countenance themselves in their sins. You are but few unto whom these things are communicated, and so may judge that all your care in and about them, will be of little significancy to put any stop unto the general declension from gospel holiness. But it is hoped that all others are warned in the same manner, yea, and more effectually than you are; however, every vessel must stand on its own bottom; 'the just shall live by his own faith;' every one of us 'must give an account of himself unto God,' and no more is required of you but your own personal duty.

It is true, you cannot put an end unto those differences and divisions, that want of love and agreement that is among professors. But you may take care that the guilt of none of these things may be justly charged on you. Love unto the saints without dissimulation, readiness to bear in meekness with different apprehensions and palpable misapprehensions, not intrenching on the foundation, freedom from imposing your sentiments on those who cannot receive them, and from judging rashly on supposed failures, readiness for universal communion in all religious duties with all that 'love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;' as they are our duties, as they are some of the principal ways whereby we may truly represent the Lord Christ and the doctrine of the gospel unto others; so they will disarm Satan and the world of a great engine whereby they work no small mischief unto the whole interest of religion.

Again, Were all professors meek, quiet, peaceable in their societies and among their neighbours, sober, temperate, humble in their personal conversation in the world, useful, kind, benign, condescending towards all, cheerful in trials and afflictions, always 'rejoicing in the Lord;' men not given up to a reprobate sense (who are not to be regarded), would at length be so far from taking offence at them, as to judge that they should not know what to do without them, and be won to endeavour a conformity unto them. In like manner, were those rules more diligently attended, which are prescribed unto all believers, as unto their conversation in this world, it would be of no small advantage unto religion. See Phil. iv. 8. 1 Pet. ii. 12. 2 Cor. xiii. 7. Rom. xiii. 12, 13. 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12. Heb. xiii. 18. Did honesty, sincerity, uprightness in all occasions of life, in the whole

converse of professors in the world, shine more brightly, and give more evidences of themselves than at present among many they seem to do, it would undoubtedly turn unto the unspeakable advantage of religion.

And lastly, for that judging or condemning of others, wherewith they are so provoked, there is but one way whereby it may be done, so as to give no just offence; and this is in our lives. The practice of holiness judgeth all unholy persons in their own breasts. And if they are provoked thereby, there is nothing in it but a new aggravation of their own sin and impiety.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

ABOUT

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS,

AND THE

PRESERVATION OF THE INTEREST

OF

THE PROTESTANT RELIGION

IN THIS NATION.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

ABOUT

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS,

&c.

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1. THE Protestant religion, introduced into this nation, by the apostolical way and means of the holiness and laborious preaching of its professors, confirmed with the martyrdom of multitudes of all sorts, being now thoroughly fixed in the minds of the body of the people, and confirmed unto them by laws and oaths, is become the principal interest of the nation, which cannot be shaken or overthrown, without the ruin of the government, and destruction of the people. Nothing therefore less being included in the attempts of the Papists, with all their interest in Europe, for the reintroducing of their religion amongst us, the nation hath been constantly filled for a hundred years with fears, jealousies, and apprehensions of dangers, to the great disturbance of the government, and disquietment of the subjects; nor can it be otherwise whilst they know that there is a pregnant design for their total subversion, together with the ruin of the Protestant religion in other places, which would have ensued thereon. But,

2. This religion so received and approved by the people, as the only true way to salvation (accompanied with an abhorrency of the superstition, idolatry, and heresies of the church of Rome, partly on the general account of their own nature, and partly on particular reasons and provocations from the attempts of those that belong unto that church, for the ruin of them and their religion), and jointly professed in the same confession of faith, hath been preserved by the means of a faithful laborious ministry, under the care, protection, and outward government of the supreme power, as the greatest bulwark of the Protestant religion in Europe.

3. The only weakness in it, as the interest of the nation (before it was infested with novel opinions), was the differences that have been amongst many of the professors of it, from the very first beginning of the reformation, and which are continued unto this day.

4. These differences, though consisting now in many particulars of less moment, arose originally, solely from the constitution of an authoritative national church-state. For some would have it to be of one sort, namely, episcopal; some of another, namely, presbyterian; some would have it of a divine original, others of a human, which must be the judgment of the king and parliament, who know it to be what they have made it, and nothing else; and some judge it a mere usurpation on the power of the civil government, and the liberties of the people.

5. It is therefore acknowledged that the body of Christian people in this nation, professing the Protestant religion, with a detestation of popery; having the gospel preached unto them, and the sacraments duly administered, under the rule of the king, are the church of England. But as unto an authoritative national church, consisting solely in the power and interest of the clergy, wherein the people, either as Christians, Protestants, or subjects of the kingdom are not concerned, such as is at present established, farther inquiry may be made about it.

6. There is a threefold form of such a church, at present contended for. The first is papal, the second episcopal, and the third presbyterian.

7. The first form of an authoritative national church-state amongst us, as in other places, was papal: and the sole use of it here in England, was to embroil our kings in their government; to oppress the people in their souls, bodies, and estates; and to sell us all, as branded slaves, unto Rome. These things have been sufficiently manifested. But in other places, especially in Germany, whilst otherwise they were all of one religion, in doctrine and worship, all conform to the church of Rome; yet in bloody contests merely about this authoritative church-state, many emperors were ruined, and a hundred set battles fought in the field.

8. At the reformation, this church-state was accommo-

dated (as was supposed) unto the interest of the nation, to obviate the evils suffered from it under the other form, and render it of use unto the religion established. Yet experience manifests that, partly from its constitution, partly from the inclinations of them by whom it is managed, other evils have accompanied or followed it, which, until they are removed, the weakness of the Protestant interest through mutual divisions, will remain among us. And among others, they are these:

(1.) An encroachment on the civil rights and government of the nation, in the courts and jurisdictions pretended to belong or to be annexed unto this church-state over the persons, goods, and liberties of the subjects (yea, in some cases their lives). It is the undoubted right and liberty of the people of this nation, that no actual jurisdiction should be exercised over their persons, estates, or liberties, in a way collateral unto, and independent on, the public's administration of justice unto all, derived from the sovereign power, and executed by known officers, rules, and orders, according unto the laws of the realm. If this be taken from them, all other pretences of securing the liberty and property of the subjects, are of no advantage unto them. For whilst they have justice in legal public courts, duly administered unto them, they may be oppressed and ruined (as many are so every day) by this pretended collateral irregular power and jurisdiction over their persons, goods, and liberties; from which it seems to be the duty of the parliament to deliver them. And it is the right of the kings of this nation, that no external power over the subjects be exercised but in their name, by virtue of their commission, to be granted and executed according unto the laws of the land. This right of kings, and this liberty of subjects also, are so sacred, as that they ought not to be intrenched on by any pretence of church or religion. For what is of God's own appointment will touch neither of them. But the administration of this jurisdiction, as it is exercised with a side-wind power, distinct, different from, and in some things contrary unto, the public justice of the nation (wherein all the subjects have an equal interest), and by the rules of a law foreign unto that of the kingdom, is a great cause of the continuation of divisions among Protestants, unto the weakening of the interest of religion itself.

(2.) It is accompanied with the prosecution and troubling of peaceable subjects, in their liberties and estates; not for any error in the Christian faith, not for any declension from the Protestant religion or compliance with popery, not for any immoralities, but merely and solely for their non-compliance with, and submission unto, those things which are supposed necessary for the preservation of their church-state, which is of itself altogether unnecessary. For the whole complex of the imposed conformity in canonical obedience, ceremonies, rites, and modes of worship, hath no other end but the sustentation and preservation thereof; being things otherwise, that belong not to Christian religion. This began, this will perpetuate our divisions, which will not be healed whilst it is continued. And whilst the two parties of Papists and Protestants are at this day contending as it were for life, soul, and being (the long-continued design of the former, under various pretences, and by great variety of attempts, being come unto its fatal trial, as unto its issue), it will not be thought meet by wise men, whose entire interest in religion and the liberties of the nation are concerned, in this contest to continue the body of Protestants in divisions, with mutual animosities, and the distrust of multitudes, on such unnecessary occasions.

(3.) Whereas, by virtue of this state and constitution, sundry persons are interested in honours, dignities, power, and wealth, in all which they have an immediate (and not merely legal) dependance on the king, since their separation from the pope; they have constantly made it their business to promote absolute monarchical power, without respect unto the true constitution of the government of this nation, which in sundry instances hath been disadvantageous to kings themselves, as well as an incumbrance to the people in parliament. For although their constitution doth really intrench upon the king's legal power, in the administration of their jurisdiction; yet, to secure their own interests, and to make a seeming compensation for that encroachment, many of them have contended for that absolute power in the king, which he never owned, nor assumed unto himself.

9. The evils and inconveniences of this constitution, of an authoritative national church-state, have been greatly

increased and propagated in this nation, as unto the heightening of divisions among Protestants, by the endeavours that have been to confirm and continue this state in an extraordinary way; such were the oath called, 'et cetera,' and the late oath at Oxford, whereon many sober peaceable Protestant ministers have been troubled, and some utterly ruined; which hath much provoked the indignation of the people against those who occasioned that law, and for whose sake it was enacted; and increased the suspicion that those who manage these things, would have men believe, that their state and rule is as sacred as the crown, or religion itself, unto the great disparagement of them both; which things are effectual engines to expel all peace and union among Protestants.

10. Those who are for the presbyterian form of an authoritative national church-state, do indeed cut off, and cast away most of those things which are the matter of contest between the present dissenting parties, and so make a nearer approach towards a firm union among all Protestants than the other do; yet such an authoritative church-state in that form, is neither proper for, nor possible unto this nation, nor consistent with that pre-eminence of the crown, that liberty of the subjects, and freedom of the consciences of Christians, which are their due. But this being not much among us pretended unto, it need not farther be spoken of.

11. It is evident, therefore, that whilst the evils enumerated are not separated from the present authoritative national church-constitution, but the powers of it are put in execution, and the ends of it pursued, it is altogether vain to expect peace and union among Protestants in England; it neither hath been so, nor ever will be so; fire and fagot will not be able to effect it. Who shall reconcile the endless differences that are, and have been, about the power, courts, and jurisdictions of this church-state, whether they be agreeable unto the laws of the land, and liberty of the subjects? The fixed judgment of many that they have no legal authority at present, nor any power given unto them by the law of the land, whereon they dare not submit unto them, is no less chargeable, dangerous, and pernicious unto them, than are their uncouth vexations and illegal proceedings unto them who are unwillingly forced to submit unto

them. And whatever may be expected, the people of this nation will never be contented that their persons, goods, or liberties, shall be made subject unto any law, but the public royal law of the kingdom administered in legal courts of justice. Who shall undertake that all Christians or Protestants in this nation shall ever submit their consciences and practices to a multitude of impositions no way warranted in the Scriptures? Or how any of the other evils that are the causes of all our divisions shall be removed, cannot easily be declared.

12. If it shall be said that if this authoritative national church-state should be removed, and no other of another form set up in the room of it, or be divested of the powers claimed at present by it, it will be impossible to preserve the Protestant religion amongst us, to keep uniformity in the profession of it, and agreement amongst its professors; it is answered, (1.) Nothing ought to be removed but what is a real cause, or unnecessary occasion at least, of all the deformity and disorder that is amongst us, and is likely so to continue. (2.) That whilst we have a Protestant king and a Protestant parliament, Protestant magistrates and Protestant ministers, with the due care of the nation that they may so continue, and a Protestant confession of faith duly adhered unto, I shall not, under the blessing of the holy Providence, fear the preservation of the Protestant religion and interest in England, without any recourse unto such a church-power, as fills all with divisions. This I say is that church of England which is the principal bulwark of the Protestant religion and interest in Europe, namely, a Protestant king, a Protestant parliament, Protestant magistrates, Protestant ministers, a Protestant confession of faith established by law, with the cordial agreement of the body of the people in all these things; esteeming the Protestant religion and its profession their chief interest in this world. To suppose that a few men, having obtained honours, dignities, and revenues unto themselves, exercising a power and authority (highly questionable whether legal or no) unto their own advantage, oppressive unto the people, and by all means perpetuating differences among Protestants, are that church of England, which is justly esteemed the bulwark of the Protestant religion, is a high

and palpable mistake. The church of England, as unto its national interest in the preservation of the Protestant religion, is not only separable from it, but weakened by it. Yea, if there be such a national constitution, as in its own nature, and by the secular advantages which it supplies men withal, inclines them to prefer their own interest above that of the Protestant religion in general, it will always endanger that religion in any nation. For hereon they will judge when they are pressed, on any occasion or circumstance of affairs, that it is better to preserve their own interest, by virtue of some dispensations securing unto them their power and secular advantages, than to venture all by a rigid contest for the Protestant religion.

Nor is it morally possible that ever popery should return into this or any other nation, but under the conduct of such a church-constitution; without this it hath no prevalent engine, but mere force, war, and oppression.

But if the interest of popery can possess this church-state, either by the inclinations of them, or the greater number of them, who have the management of it, or by their dependance, as unto their interest, on the supreme authority; if that happen in any age to give countenance thereunto, the whole nation will quickly be insensibly influenced, and betrayed into popery as it were, they know not how. Hence have been such national conversions to and fro in England, as have been in no other places or countries in the world. For the care of the public's preservation of religion, being, as it is supposed, intrusted in this church-state and the managers of it, if by any means it be possessed by popery, or influenced by a popish prince, the religion of the whole nation will be lost immediately.

For as unto all other ministers who have the immediate guidance of the people, they will suppose that they can do nothing of themselves in this matter, but are only obliged unto the conduct of the church-state itself. And having their station therein alone, and depending thereon, they may easily be either seduced by their interest, or excluded from their duty by the power of that church-state whereunto they are subject. By this means the whole interest of the Protestant religion in this nation as unto its preservation, depends on such a state as being the concernment of a few, and those such as have an especial interest of their

own, distinct from that of the Protestant religion in general, may be easily possessed by popery, and probably would be so, if they should have a popish prince to influence them.

But whereas the people are now possessed and fully persuaded of the truth of Protestant religion, if there be no public machine or engines insensibly to turn about the whole body of them, but they must be dealt withal individually or parochially, it will, as was said, be morally impossible, that ever popery should become the religion of this nation any other way but by the destruction or killing of the present inhabitants.

Allow that the church-state supposed may, in those who have the trust and power of it, be seduced, corrupted, or any way induced or disposed unto the interest of popery, as it may be; it is possible some individual persons may be found, that for the sake of truth, will expose their lives to the stake or otherwise. So did many in the days of queen Mary, though now esteemed by not a few, foolish zealots for their pains. But the body of the people through their various legal relations unto this church-state, deserting the care of their own preservation, by their trust in the conduct thereof, whereunto they are unavoidably compelled, will quickly be inveigled so as not to be able to extricate themselves. But set them at liberty, so as that every parliament, every magistrate, every minister, every good Christian, may judge that the preservation of their religion is their own duty in all their capacities, and popery with all its arts will know neither how to begin, nor how to proceed with them.

If then there were no such church-state as being in the management of a few, is seducible, and not difficult to be possessed by the interest of popery, whereby the whole nation would be at once betrayed; the Protestant religion is now so firmly seated in the minds of the people, so countenanced by law, so esteemed by all to be the principal interest of the nation, that the wit of all the Jesuits of the world, knows not how to attack it, much less endanger it; which if there be need, shall be farther demonstrated.

13. Nor is it a matter of art or difficulty to declare a way for the security of the Protestant religion, with the rights of the government, and liberties of the subjects, with the due freedom of conscience, without any such church-state;

but it is what the principles of religion, common prudence, and the honest interest of the nation do direct unto; as to instance in the things that are most material unto that end:

1. Let a solemn renunciation of popery, suited unto the general principles of the Protestant religion, be established by law, to be made publicly by every person, that is to partake of the rights and privileges already confirmed unto that religion, or which afterward shall be so; to be renewed as occasion shall require.

2. Let there be one solemn stated confession of the Christian Protestant faith, such as is the doctrine of the articles of the church of England, especially as explained in the public authorized writings of the church in the days of queen Elizabeth and king James, before the inroad of novel opinions among us; to be subscribed by all enjoying a public ministry.

3. Let the magistrate assume unto himself the exercise of his just power, in the preservation of the public peace in all instances; in the encouragement and protection of the professors of the Protestant religion; in securing unto all men their legal rights, already granted unto them, in their several places and stations, in the punishment of all crimes cognizable by human judgment; in deposing of men from their enjoyments or privileges, which they hold on any condition, as suppose their orthodox profession of the Protestant religion, if they fail in, or fall from the performance of it; leaving only things purely spiritual and evangelical to the care and power of the churches, and all litigious causes of what sort soever, with the infliction of all outward penalties, unto the determination of the laws of the land; and a great progress will be made towards order and peace amongst us.

4. Yea, these few things in general are only needful thereunto: (1.) Let the king and parliament secure the Protestant religion, as it is the public interest of the nation, against all attempts of the papacy for its destruction, with proper laws, and their due execution. (2.) Let the wisdom and power of the nation in the supreme and subordinate magistrates be exerted, in the rule of all persons and causes, civil and criminal, by one and the same law of the land, in a compliance wherewith the allegiance of the subject unto the king doth consist; without which, government will

never be well fixed on its proper and immoveable basis. (3.) That provision be made for the sedulous preaching of the gospel in all parts and places of the land, or all parochial churches, the care whereof is incumbent on the magistrates. (4.) Let the church be protected in the exercise of its spiritual power, by spiritual means only, as preaching of the word, administration of the sacraments, and the like. Whatever is farther pretended, as necessary unto any of the ends of true religion or its preservation in the nation, is but a cover for the negligence, idleness, and insufficiency of some of the clergy, who would have an outward appearance of effecting that by external force, which themselves by diligent prayer, sedulous preaching of the word, and an exemplary conversation, ought to labour for in the hearts of men.

5. It is evident that hereon all causes of jealousies, animosities, and strifes among the Protestants, would be taken away; all complaints of oppression by courts and jurisdictions, not owned by the people, be prevented; all encroachments on the consciences of men (which are and will be an endless and irreconcilable cause of difference among us) be obviated; all ability to control or disturb the power and privilege of kings in their persons or rule, and all temptations to exalt their power in absoluteness above the law, will be removed; so as that, by the blessing of God, peace and love may be preserved among all true Protestants.

And if there do ensue hereon some variety in outward rites and observations, as there was in all the primitive churches, who pleaded that the unity of faith was commended and not at all impeached by such varieties; yet whilst the same doctrine of truth is preached in all places, the same sacraments only administered, wherein every protestant subject of the nation will be at liberty to join in Protestant Christian worship, and to partake of all church-ordinances, in the outward way, and according unto the outward rites of his own choosing, without the authoritative examination or prohibition of any pretended church-power but what in his own judgment he doth embrace; no inconvenience will follow hereon, unless it be judged such, that the Protestant religion, the liberty of the subjects, and the due freedom of the consciences of men sober and peaceable, will be all preserved.

A

BRIEF AND IMPARTIAL ACCOUNT

OF

THE NATURE

OF

THE PROTESTANT RELIGION;

ITS

PRESENT STATE IN THE WORLD,

ITS

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS,

WITH THE WAYS AND INDICATIONS OF THE RUIN OR CONTINUANCE OF ITS PUBLIC NATIONAL PROFESSION.

THE

STATE AND FATE

OF THE

PROTESTANT RELIGION.

THE world is at this day filled with discourses about the Protestant religion, and the profession of it; and that not without cause. The public opposition that is made unto it, the designs that are managed with policy and power for its utter extirpation, and the confidence of many that they will take effect, must needs fill the minds of them whose principal interest and concerns lie in it, with many thoughts about the event. Never was there a greater cause brought on the stage for a trial. A cause wherein the glory of God is concerned above any thing at this day in the world. A cause wherein the most eminent prevailing powers of the earth are visibly engaged as unto its ruin; and whereunto all the diabolical arts of men are employed. A cause wherein those who embrace that religion, do judge that not only their lives, but the eternal welfare of them and their posterity is inevitably concerned. This cannot but fill the minds of all men with various conjectures about the issue of these things, according as their interest works in them by hopes and fears. Some of them therefore do endeavour by their counsels and other ways for the preservation and continuance of this Protestant religion amongst ourselves, according as they have an accession unto public affairs; and some whose lot is cast into a private capacity, do engage faith and prayer unto the same purpose. The enemies of it in the mean time are powerful, active, and restless; many amongst us being uncertain in their minds, as not resolved where to fix their interest, and a greater multitude, like Gallio, care for none of these

things. This being a matter therefore wherein all men, who have any sense of religion, are so deeply concerned, it may not be unseasonable, briefly to inquire what is this Protestant religion which is so contended about; what is its present state in the world; what its strength and weakness as unto its public profession, and what is like to be the issue of the present contest. This is that which the ensuing leaves are designed unto: and it is hoped they may be of use unto some, to extricate their minds from involved fruitless thoughts, to direct them in their duty, and to bring them unto an acquiescency in the will of God.

The Protestant religion may be considered either as it is religion in general, that is, Christian religion; or as it is distinct from and opposite unto another pretended profession of the same religion, whereon it is called Protestant.

In the first sense of it, it derives its original from Christ and his apostles. What they taught to be believed, what they commanded to be observed in the worship of God; all of it, and nothing but that, is the Protestant religion. Nothing else belongs unto it, in nothing else is it concerned. These, therefore, are the principles of the religion of Protestants, whereinto their faith and obedience are resolved.

1. What was revealed unto the church by the Lord Christ and his apostles, is the whole of that religion which God will and doth accept.

2. So far as is needful unto the faith, obedience, and eternal salvation of the church, what they taught, revealed, and commanded, is contained in the Scriptures of the New Testament, witnessed unto and confirmed by those of the Old.

3. All that is required of us that we may please God, be accepted with him, and come to the eternal enjoyment of him, is that we truly believe what is so revealed and taught, yielding sincere obedience unto what is commanded in the Scriptures.

Upon these principles, Protestants confidently propose their religion unto the trial of all mankind. If in any thing it be found to deviate from them, if it exceeds in any instance what is so revealed, taught, and commanded; if it be defective in the faith or practice of any thing that is so revealed or commanded, they are ready to renounce it. Here

they live and die, from the foundation they will not depart: this is their religion.

And if these principles will not secure us, as unto our present acceptance with God in religion, and the eternal enjoyment of him, he hath left all mankind at an utter uncertainty to make a blind venture for an invisible world; which is altogether inconsistent with his infinite wisdom, goodness, and benignity.

Being in possession of these principles of truth and security from Christ and his apostles, it belongs unto the Protestant religion not to change or forego them, and to repose our confidence in the infallibility or authority of the pope of Rome, or of the church whereof he is the head. For these principles of assurance are such as every way become the wisdom and goodness of God; and such as that our nature is not capable in this life, of those which are higher, or of a more illustrious evidence. Let the contrary unto either of these be demonstrated, and we will renounce the Protestant religion. To forego them for such as are irreconcilable unto divine wisdom and goodness, as also to the common reason of mankind, is an effect of the highest folly and of strong delusion.

For that all mankind should be obliged to place all their confidence and assurance of pleasing God, of living unto him, and coming unto the enjoyment of him for eternity, on the pope of Rome and his infallibility, however qualified and circumstantiated, considering what these popes are and have been, is eternally irreconcilable unto the greatness, wisdom, love, and kindness of God; as also unto the whole revelation made of himself by Jesus Christ. The principles of Protestant religion before mentioned, do every way become, are highly suited unto, the nature and goodness of God. No man living shall ever be able to instance in one tittle of them, that is not correspondent with divine goodness and wisdom. But on the first naming of this other way, no man who knows any thing what the pope is, and what is his church, if he be not blinded with prejudice and interest, will be able to satisfy himself that it is consistent with infinite goodness and wisdom to commit the salvation of mankind, which he values above all things, unto such a security.

Neither hath this latter way any better consistency with

human wisdom, or the common reason of mankind; namely, that those who are known, many of them, to be better and wiser men than those popes, should resolve their religion, and therein their whole assurance of pleasing God, with all their hopes of a blessed eternity, into the authority and infallibility of the pope and his church; seeing many of them, the most of them, especially for some ages, have been persons wicked, ignorant, proud, sensual, and brutish in their lives.

This then is the foundation of the Protestant religion, in that it is built on those principles, which are every way suited unto the divine nature and goodness, as also satisfactory unto human reason; with a refusal of them which are unworthy of infinite wisdom to give, and the ordinary reason of men to admit or receive.

Secondly, As the name Protestant is distinctive with respect unto some other pretended profession of Christian religion; so it derives this denomination from them who in all ages, after the apostacy of the church of Rome came to be expressly antichristian, departed from the communion of it, opposed it, reformed themselves, and set up the true worship of God according unto the degrees and measures of gospel light which they had received.

This was done successively in a long tract of time through sundry ages, until by an accession of multitudes, princes and people, unto the same profession, they openly testified and protested against the papal apostacy and tyranny, whence they became to be commonly called Protestants. And the principles whereon they all of them proceeded from the first to last, which constitute their religion as Protestant, were these that follow:

1. That there are in the Scripture, prophesies, predictions, and warnings, especially in the book of the Revelation, and the Second Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Thessalonians, that there should be a great apostacy or defection in the visible church from the faith, worship, and holiness of the gospel; and in opposition unto what was appointed of Christ, the erection of a worldly, carnal, antichristian church-state, composed of tyranny, idolatry, and persecution, which should for a long time oppress the true worshippers of Christ with bloody cruelty, and at last be itself 'consumed with the

spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his coming.'

This defection was so plainly foretold, as also the beginning of it in a mystery of iniquity designed even in the days of the apostles, that believers in all ages did expect the accomplishment of it by the introduction of an antichristian state and power, though the manner of it was hidden from them, until it was really fulfilled. I say from the days of the apostles, and the giving out of those prophecies and predictions of the coming of antichrist and an apostate church-state with him, all Christians in all ages did believe and expect that it should come, until its real coming, in a way and manner unexpected, confounded their apprehensions about it.

2. Their second principle as Protestants was, that this defection and antichristian church-state so plainly foretold by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures, was openly and visibly accomplished in the church of Rome, with the nations that had subjected themselves unto the yoke thereof. Therein they found and saw all that tyranny and oppression, all that pride and self-exaltation above every thing that hath the name of God upon it, all that idolatry and false worship, all that departure from the faith of the gospel, all that contempt of evangelical obedience, which were foretold to come in under, and constitute the fatal apostacy.

3. Hereon their third principle was, that as they valued the glory of God, the honour of Christ and the gospel, their own salvation, and the good of the souls of others, they were obliged to forsake and renounce all communion with that apostate church, though they saw that their so doing would cost many of them their dearest blood, or lives.

4. They were convinced hereon, that it was their duty publicly to protest against all those abominations, to reform themselves as unto faith, worship, and conversation, according unto the rules before laid down, as those that are fundamental unto Christian religion.

These were the principles whereon Christian religion, as it is Protestant, was reintroduced into the world, after it had been not only obscured, but almost excluded out of it, as unto its public profession. And these principles are avowed by all true Protestants, as those whereon they are

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sm; namely, by the prayers, preaching, writings, suf-
ngs, and holiness of life of them who embraced it and
re called to promote it. And herein their sufferings for
number of them that suffered, and variety of all cruel
arations of death, are inexpressible. It is capable of a
demonstration, that those who were slain by the sword,
otherwise destroyed for their testimony unto Christ and
gospel, in opposition unto the papal apostacy and idola-
far exceed the number of them that suffered for the
ligion in all the pagan persecutions of old. A
o soaked and watered with the blood of the martyrs,
not be so easily plucked up as some imagine. Nay it
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But it had no sooner fixed its profession in some nations, but it was loaden with all manner of reproaches, charged with all the evils that fell out in the world after its entrance, and by all sorts of arts and pretences rendered suspected and hateful unto princes and potentates. Whatever is evil in or unto mankind, especially unto the interest of great men, was with great noise and clamour charged on it. For so it was in the first entrance of the Christian religion under paganism. There was neither plague, nor famine, nor earthquake, nor inundation of water, nor war, nor invasion by enemies, but all was charged on that new religion. And the reason hereof was, not only the hatred of the truth through the love of sin and unrighteousness, and an ingrafted power of superstition through blind devotion, but principally because for a long tract of time, the whole of the profession of religion had been suited unto the secular interests of men, supplying them under various pretences with power, domination, territories, titles, revenues, wealth, ease, grandeur, and honour, with an insinuation into, and power over, the consciences of all sorts of persons; a thing

very desirable to men of corrupt minds, and easily turned into an engine unto very bad and pernicious ends. That the whole complex, and all its parts in their various motions and operations, of the Christian religion in the papacy, is framed and fitted unto these ends, so as to give satisfaction unto all corrupt and ambitious desires in men, is palpable unto all that are not wilfully blind. But this Protestant religion so introduced, stated the interest of Christian religion in a way and design utterly inconsistent herewith and destructive of it. And this was to give all glory and honour to God and Christ alone, and to teach the guides of the church to be humble, holy, zealous ensamples of the flock; utterly renouncing all secular power and domination, with territories, titles, and great revenues on the account of their office, and the discharge of it. And was it any wonder that those who were in possession of three parts of the power, and a third part of the revenue of most nations in Europe, should look on this principle as the worst of devils, and so represent it, as to frighten above half the monarchs of these nations from once looking steadily upon it, whereby they might have easily discovered the cheat that was put upon them? And thus was it with the first planters of Christian religion with respect unto the pagans; Acts xix. 27.

But herein many labour to make a difference between the introduction of religion under paganism, and the reformation of it under antichristianism. For they say that the first professors of Christian religion, for three hundred years, endured their persecutions with all patience, never once stirring up either wars or commotions in the defence of their profession; but since, upon and after the introduction of Protestant religion, there have been many tumults and disorders, many popular commotions and wars, which have been caused thereby. For if all the professors of it had quietly suffered themselves to have been killed with the sword, or hanged, or burned, or tortured to death in the inquisition, or starved in dungeons (and more was not required of them), there would have been no such wars about religion in the world. For their enemies intended nothing but to destroy them in peace and quietness, without the least disturbance unto the civil rule among men.

I say this difference did not arise from any difference in the religion of the one and the other, nor of the principles of those by whom they were professed; but it hath proceeded from external causes and circumstances, that were greatly different between the primitive Christians and the Protestants in some places and nations. For the primitive Christians, whose story we have, were all of them placed in, and subject unto, one empire. In that whole empire and all the provinces of it, there was not one law, custom, or usage giving the least countenance unto right of protection of liberty. There was not one prince, ruler, senate, governor, that had the least pretence of legal right to protect or defend them in their profession against the will and law of the emperor or empire. The outward rights of religion were no way allied in any thing unto the civil rights of men. However numerous therefore the Christians were in those days, they were all absolutely private persons, without pretence of law or right to defend themselves; in which state of things it is the undoubted principle of all Protestants, that where men are persecuted merely on the account of religion, without relation unto the civil rights and liberties of mankind, their duty is patiently to suffer without the least resistance. But it hath been otherwise upon the reformation, and since: for the protection and preservation of religion was taken up by sundry potentates, free princes, and cities, who had a legal right and power to protect themselves and their subjects in the profession of it. It hath been, and is at this day, incorporated into the laws, rights, and interests of sundry nations, which ought to be defended. And no instance can be given of any people defending themselves in the profession of the protestant religion by arms, but where, together with their religion, their enemies did design and endeavour to destroy those rights, liberties, and privileges, which not only the light of nature, but the laws and customs of their several countries, did secure unto them as a part of their birthright inheritance. And in some places, though the name of religion hath been much used on the one side and the other; yet it hath been neither the cause nor occasion of the wars and troubles that have been in them. And this makes their case utterly different from that of the primitive Christians.

This religion being thus reinstated in many nations, it brought forth fruit in them, even as the gospel did at its first preaching in the places whereinto it came; Col. i. 6.

It brought forth fruit in them by whom it was received, such as is the proper fruit of religion; namely, it did so in light, knowledge, truth, in holiness, in the real conversion of multitudes unto God, in good works, in the spiritual comfort of believers in life and death, with all other fruits of righteousness which are to the praise of God. Thereby also was the worship of God vindicated from idolatry and superstition, and restored in many places unto its primitive simplicity and purity.

It brought also no small advantage even unto those nations, both princes and their subjects, by whom the profession thereof was never received; as Christian religion also did of old unto the pagan world. For hereby it is that the kings and potentates of Christendom, even those of the Roman profession, have much eased themselves of that intolerable yoke of bondage that was on them unto the pope's pretended power and his impositions. For whilst all nations were in subjection to him, it was at their utmost hazard that any one king or state should contend with him about any of his demands or assumptions; for he could stir up what nation he pleased, and give them sufficient encouragement to avenge his quarrels on rebellious princes, which he also did in instances innumerable. But since so many nations fell off from all dependance on him and subjection to him by the light and profession of the Protestant religion, there is a balance of power against him, and an awe upon him in his presumptions, lest he should be dealt withal by others in the like manner. Had these western parts of the world continued under a superstitious sense of a fealty and obedience in all things due to the pope, as they were before the reformation, the king of France himself should not so easily have rejected his personal infallibility and jurisdiction as he seems to have done; but he hath now no way left to avenge himself but assassinations, which at this time may prove of very evil consequence unto himself. Wherefore the princes of Europe, as well those by whom the Protestant religion is not embraced, yea, is opposed and persecuted, as those by whom it is received, seem not so sensible of the

advantage which doth accrue unto them all from thence alone it is, with the interest and hich it hath obtained in the world, that they are n their inds and in their rule, from as base a servitude on as ever persons under their denomination were

common people also who yet continue in the com- ion of the papal church, have received no small ad- e by that effectual light which shines in the world the principles of this religion, even where it is not ed. For from the fear of t discoveries to be made hath a curb been put upon e flagitious lives of the sts and friars, wherewith all places were defiled; shame with necessity having stirred them up to deliver them- s in some measure from their old stupid ignorance. y retrenchments have been made also in some of the gross parts of idolatry, that were for many ages in eral practice among them. And they are hereby also in e good measure freed from the terror of evil spirits erewith they were continually haunted. For before the formation, possessions, apparitions, sprites, ghosts, fiends, with silly miracles about them, filled all places, and were a great annoyance unto the common people. Somewhat there was no doubt of the juggling of priests in these things, and somewhat of the agency of the devil, each of them making use of the other to further their own designs. But upon the first preaching of the gospel, there was an abatement made of these things in all places, which hath gone on, until they are everywhere grown the matter of scorn and contempt.

This religion being thus planted, and producing these effects, the house of Austria in both the branches of it, the imperial and the regal, espoused the antichristian interest and quarrel against it; and for eighty years, or thereabouts, endeavoured by all ways of force and cruelty its utter extirpation. What immense treasures of wealth they have spent and wasted, what an ocean of blood they have shed, both of their own subjects and others in the pursuit of this design, cannot be well conceived. But what hath been the issue of all their undertakings to this end? They have so far broken themselves and their power in their obstinate

pursuit of them, that those who not long since thought of nothing less than a universal monarchy, are forced to seek unto Protestant states and nations, to preserve them from immediate ruin. So vain, foolish, and fruitless for the most part, are the deep counsels and projections of men, so destructive and ruinous unto themselves in the issue, when their desires and designs are enlarged beyond the bounds which right and equity have fixed unto them; especially will they be so, when they are found fighting against God and his interest in the world. And if the same design be now pursued by another, it will in time come unto the same catastrophe.

I shall not speak any thing of the present state of this Protestant religion, as unto its political interests in the world. It is in general known to most, and hath been particularly inquired into by many. I shall only briefly consider something of its weakness, its danger, and what is like to be the issue of it, as unto its public profession in the world; which are the subjects of many men's daily converse.

The political weakness of the Protestant religion ariseth solely from the divisions that are among them by whom it is professed. And these are of two sorts: First, Such as are of a civil nature amongst princes and states; and, secondly, Such as are religious among divines and churches. As unto the first of these, some good men who value religion above all their earthly concerns, measuring other men, even princes who profess religion, by themselves, have been almost astonished that there is not such a thing as a Protestant interest so prevalent amongst them, as to subordinate all particular contests and designings unto itself. But whereas there was formerly an appearance of some such thing, which had no small influence on public counsels, and produced some good useful effects; at present it seems to be beyond hopes of a revival, and is of little consideration in the world. Could such a thing be expected, that the nations and the powers of them which publicly profess the Protestant religion, should avow the preservation and protection of it to be their principal interest, and regulate their counsels accordingly, giving this the pre-eminence in all things, their adversaries would be content to dwell quietly at home, without offering much at their disturbance. But these things

the end of my present consideration, nor do I think that any sort of men shall have the glory of preserving the interest of Christ in the world; he will do it himself.

Again, The religious differences that are amongst them as churches, do weaken the political interest of Protestants. They have done so from the very beginning of the reformation. And when the first differences among them were in some measure digested and brought unto some tolerable composure, about sixty years ago there was an inroad made on the doctrine that had been received among the reformed churches by novel opinions, which hath grown unto this day to the great weakening of the whole interest. And as far as I can see, it is in vain to dissuade them from contending about their small allotments in the house, or it may be but some supposed appurtenances of them, whilst others are visibly digging at the foundation to oppress them all with the fall of the whole fabric. In these things lies the sole outward political weakness of the Protestant interest in the world, whose direful effects God alone can prevent.

We may hereon inquire, what at present is like to be the issue and event of this Protestant religion, as unto its public profession in the world. For the adversaries of it do every day discover not only their desires and endeavours for its extirpation, but their expectations also of its speedy ruin. They suppose the time is come when that heresy, as they call it, which hath so long infested the northern nations, shall by their arts, contrivances, and power, be utterly rooted out. And it is known that those discoveries of their minds and hopes herein, which have occasionally come unto light amongst us, are but indications of those counsels and combinations in other places and among other persons, whereby their hopes are to be accomplished. And if it were unto our present purpose, much might be offered to manifest that those consultations and contrivances which are constant in the managers of the papal interest both at Rome and elsewhere, for the utter extirpation of the Protestant religion, have been ordered, disposed, and cast into such methods, as not only to stir up all means of expedition, but also with respect unto a speedy immediate execution.

We shall therefore briefly inquire, by what way and means this may be effected, or what is like to give this de-

sign an accomplishment, giving every thing its due weight and consideration; for what the event will be God only knows.

The ruin of the Protestant religion, as unto its public profession, must be either by a general defection from it, or by a force upon it, or by a reconciliation and coalescency with the Roman church.

This defection must be either of the princes, or of the clergy, or of the people, or of them all in conjunction.

Of the first, or the defection of princes unto the papacy we have had some instances in the last age, but scarce of any who have been absolutely sovereign or supreme; unless it be of one, who together with her religion, wisely and honestly left her crown. But I suppose there lieth here no great danger or fear as to kings, or such as on whose authority the profession of religion in their dominions doth much depend. For they are too wise to be weary of their present station and liberty. Who can suppose that any of them would be willing to stand at the gates of the pope's palace barefoot, for a night and a day, and be disciplined to boot, as it was with one of the greatest kings of England? or to hold the pope's stirrup, whilst he mounted his horse, and be rebuked for want of breeding in holding it on the wrong side? or would they lie on the ground, and have their necks trod upon by the pope, which a courageous emperor was forced to submit unto? or have their crowns kicked from their heads by the foot of a legate? or be assassinated for not promoting the papal interest in the way and mode of them concerned, as it was with two kings of France?

It will be said, that these things are past and gone, the popes have now no such power as formerly; and the kings that are of the Roman church, do live as free from impositions on them by the pretensions of papal power, as any kings on the earth. But supposing such a change, and that the king of France, as great as he is, do find in the issue that there is such a change, yet if we do not know the reasons of it, they do. Is it because the maintainers of the papacy have changed their principles and opinions in this matter? Is it that they have disclaimed the power and authority which they exercised in former ages? Is it from any abatement of the papal omnipotency in their judgment? Do

they think that the popes had not right to do what they did in those days, or that they have not yet right to do the like again? It is none of those nor any reason of this sort that is the cause of the pretended change. The true and only reason of it is, the balancing of their power by the Protestant interest. So many kings, princes, potentates, states, and nations, being not only fallen off from that blind obedience and subjection wherein they were universally enthralled unto them in those days, but ready to oppose them in all their attempts to execute their pretended power, they are forced for a season to lower their sails, and to pluck in those horns wherewith formerly they pushed kings and princes unto their ruin. Should there be a restoration of their power and interest in the minds of men, which would ensue on the extirpation of the Protestant religion, the greatest kings of Europe should quickly find themselves yoked and overmatched both in their own dominions, and by such as will be ready to execute their designs. And on this supposition they will cross all experience of former ages, if having weathered their difficulties and conquered their opposers, they be not more haughty and secure in the execution of their power and pretended office, than ever they were before.

Whatever delusion therefore may befall sovereign princes in their personal capacities, none of them can be so forsaken of common understanding, as not to see that by a defection unto the papacy, they bring a bondage on themselves and their subjects, from which God by his providence, through the light and truth of the Protestant religion, had set them free. And it is certain enough that there is at this day so much rational light diffused in the world, that even those who on various inducements may comply with any of them in the reintroduction of popery into any of their territories, will quickly find what condition of slavery and contempt they have brought themselves into, and thereon make the new posture of affairs very uneasy to themselves and their rulers. Yea, no sort of men will be given up unto more furious reflections, first on themselves, and then on others, than they will be, when they find themselves ensnared. Those who on such occasions have neither deceived themselves, nor suffered themselves to be deceived by others, may enjoy a sedate tranquillity of mind in all that shall befall them; but

these, when they have digested the shame of being deluded, will be restless in their minds, and intent on new occasions. I suppose, therefore, there is no great danger to be feared on this hand, and if there should, that the event of counsels mixed with so much madness and ingratitude will be a sudden catastrophe.

And as unto the clergy, there can be no defection amongst them, unless it be from a weariness of their present station, upon the principles of the protestant religion. For they have most of them too much light to be corrupted any way but by interest. Now the principles intended are these two: (1.) That the reverence which they claim, and the revenues which they possess, are not due unto them merely on the account of their offices and the titles which they bear, but on that of their faithful discharge of their office in diligent laborious preaching of the gospel, and sedulous endeavours for the conversion and edification of the souls of men. This principle lay at the foundation of the reformation, and was one of the greatest means of its promotion. (2.) That a distinction from the people by sacred office, requires indispensably a distinction from them in gravity, usefulness, and holiness of conversation. If men should grow weary of their station in the clergy on those principles (and others the Protestant religion will not afford them), it is to be feared that on provoking occasions they may verge unto that church-state, wherein all things desirable unto them in this world will be secured on easier terms. And the danger will be increased, if they are capable of envy and vexation from those principles of light and liberty which have been communicated unto the people by the Protestant religion, rendering all expectations of reverence and honour but what ariseth from, and is proportionate unto, real worth and usefulness, altogether vain. And if hereon they are exposed to impressions from the wealth, ease, and power, proposed unto them in the papal church, it is to be feared that they may regulate themselves by opportunities. And on these grounds, not a few ministers in France, being withal at the same time under the dread of trouble and persecution, have gone over unto the adverse party. In the mean time there is some relief herein, that the generality of mankind is so far enlightened, that no pleas or pretences of other reasons for

such a change or defection will bear the least admittance, but it will be ascribed unto corrupt affection and carnal interest. However, if it be contained, as many judge it is, in the prophecies of the Revelation, that the churches of the nations who were once of the communion, and in subjection unto the church of Rome, shall be restored unto her power and possession again, at least for a short season, this sort of men must be signally instrumental therein. And if there be any nations where these two things concur, that all church or ecclesiastical power and jurisdiction is, by the law of the land, vested in the king, being as unto its whole exercise derived from him alone, whereby that which he is, the church is as to power and jurisdiction, and nothing else; and where the clergy do hold and derive their spiritual power, their power of order and office, by a flux and descent of it from the church of Rome and the authority thereof, upon the accession of a Papist unto supreme rule, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, long to secure the public profession of the Protestant religion in such nations. I say in this case, although the Protestant religion may be preserved in multitudes of individuals and their voluntary societies in the communion of it; yet in such a church-state its public profession cannot long be continued; for it will quickly be dissolved by its own intestine differences; which every wise man may easily foresee. But the force of law, interest, and inclination, is hardly to be withstood.

The danger of defection from the profession of the Protestant religion in the people, must be measured from the preparations for it that are found amongst them, and the means of their furtherance. Now these are nothing but the vicious habits of the minds of men, inclining their affections to take shelter in the papal superstition. Such are ignorance, lewdness of conversation, provocations from the power of religion in others, atheism and interest, from hopes of advantage proposed unto some of them who have an influence on others. There can be no defection unto popery in or among the people, who have ever known any thing of the Protestant religion, but what proceeds from these causes, which wholly obliterate all sense of its power, all delight in its truth, and dispose men unto any thing wherein they hope they may find a better compliance with their in-

clinations, or at least free them from that whereof they are weary, and wherein they find no advantage. And the means whereby these things are promoted in them, are want of due instruction, examples of sin and impunity therein, public discountenance of the power of religion, personal and family necessities through pride or sensuality, with desire of revenge.

Where these things abound in any nation, amongst any people, there is no security of their stability in that profession of religion which yet they avow. For all these things will continually operate in their minds, and occasions will not be wanting in the watchful diligence of the devil and his instruments, to excite and provoke their corrupt lusts unto a declension from their profession, which with many of them will be carried on gradually and insensibly, until they find themselves ensnared in the papal interest beyond what they can extricate themselves out of.

I shall make no conjectures concerning the ruin or total loss of the public profession of the Protestant religion, from those ways and means of a general defection from it. For if there were more danger in them than there is, I know there is yet a way whereby they may be all defeated. And this being in the hand of God alone, with him it is to be left, and unto his care it is to be committed.

Force is the next way whereby the same effect may be produced. And this is that which those of the Roman interest do place their principal confidence in; and it is that which they judge they may lawfully make use of, whenever they are able so to do. Be the force esteemed necessary unto this end, of what sort it will; be it by private assassinations, legal persecutions, national oppressions, foreign invasions, all is alike unto them; they are all of them to be made use of, as their supposed opportunities do require. That which at present doth most encourage their hopes and expectations on this ground of them, is the power and inclinations of the French monarch, and the influence they have on the counsels and actings of other nations. But that whole business seems to me on many accounts, to be but 'res unius ætatis' at most; many countries may be ravaged and spoiled, and new work cut out for another age, but a stated interest for the papal advantage will scarcely

be fixed thereby. They must be a people of another temper and complexion of mind than our neighbours are, of a more profound melancholy and superstition than they are subject unto; of less vehement desires of their own, and less subject to alter in their designs on provocations and disappointments, who are fit pertinaciously to pursue the advancement of the papal power and dominion, wherein themselves at length shall be no sharers. But where there is a concurrence of all these things; namely, an inclination in many of all sorts unto a defection, preparations in the minds of more thereunto, the persecution of some so far as the laws will permit, and just fears of a greater outward force, relief and safety is to be expected only from divine power and goodness.

The third way whereby the public profession of the Protestant religion may be ruined in any nation, or universally, is by a reconciliation unto the church of Rome. For although this be really of the same nature and kind with that of the defection before spoken of, yet seeing it is to be effected by a pretended mutual condescension, it will be averred to be different from a total defection. That which I intend is a coalescency in the same church-state, faith, worship, and rule with the church of Rome, on such concessions, and reliefs from some present impositions, as shall on both sides be agreed on. And this is the most plausible engine for attaining the fatal end designed, that can be made use of; and possibly the most likely to take effect. The pretences of the peace of Christendom, and the union of Christians (though nothing less be intended, than that peace and union which Christ hath appointed; nor will the peace pretended be ever attained by it), are suited to cover and overwhelm men with reproaches, who shall but endeavour to discover their falsity and folly. But the present posture of counsels and affairs in the world, calls for somewhat a more distinct consideration of these things, which yet shall be but preparatory unto what shall be farther discoursed unto the same purpose, if the process in the design do farther manifest itself.

From the very beginning of the reformation there have been various attempts for a composition of the differences between the church of Rome, and those who were departed

from it. Councils of princes, conventions of divines, imperial edicts, sedate consultations of learned men, have all been made use of unto this end, and all in vain. And it was for awhile the judgment of most wise men, that the council of Trent had rendered all reconciliations, so much as by a pretence of any condescension on the part of Rome, utterly impossible. For it hath bound itself and all the world that will own its authority, under solemn curses, not to make any change or alteration in the present state of the papal church, though the salvation of all men living should depend thereon.

Yet notwithstanding the fixing of this impassable gulf between the two churches or religions, some persons professing the Protestant religion, either angry at their station and disappointments in the world, or ambitious above their station in the Protestant church, though of the highest dignity attainable in it; or out of an itch or curiosity of venting their conciliatory notions, as they suppose them, and so to entitle themselves unto the name of peacemakers, have in the foregoing and present age revived the same fruitless design, but hitherto without success.

But it must be confessed, that at present things are more prepared for the plying of this engine, and making it effectual unto the ruin of the Protestant religion, than they were in former ages; whereof I shall give some instances.

Sundry learned men, who have made themselves of great name and reputation thereby, have in their public writings granted a patriarchal primacy in the west unto the bishop of Rome, which is meet to be restored. And therewithal they have relinquished the true grounds of the reformation. For whereas the real causes and reasons of it were the idolatry, heresies, and tyranny, of the church of Rome, which every private Christian might understand, and was bound to separate from in his own person, were there no other of his mind in the world but himself alone, and had right so to do; they have resolved it into the power of a national church in that patriarchate, with their supreme civil ruler, to reform itself from such things as they esteem abuses. Now as this is a matter wherein the consciences of the people or private Christians are not concerned; so it is built on sundry arbitrary presumptions that have not the

least countenance given unto them from the word of God. And as this endeavour tends directly to divert the minds of men from the true causes and reasons of the reformation, whereon all the martyrs died; so it leads directly upon a relief against the pretended abuses, to return unto the pope as a head of unity and peace unto all churches, at least in these western parts of the world, which is all that at present is pleaded for, by many of the Papists themselves. For the dispute, they say, about the pope, his power and infallibility, you need not trouble yourselves; let the bishop of Rome in his succession from St. Peter be acknowledged as a head of unity and peace unto all Christians, with a patriarchal power, and no more shall be required of you, that is at present; for the pope will be pope whilst he is so; that is, until he is utterly cast out of the church. But by such concessions as these, the way is preparing for a composition as unto the outward order and rule of the church.

As unto the internal part of religion, in doctrines of faith, there is no small advance towards a reconciliation in the introduction of novel opinions into the Protestant profession. For although on their first entrance among us, they were publicly protested against by the Commons of England in parliament, as introductory of popery; yet their prevalency since hath been so great, as that their abettors are ready to avow them as the doctrine of the present church. Yet are they all of them opposite unto the fundamental principles of the reformation, which were to exalt the grace of God, and debase the pride of men; from the contempt of which principles, all the abominations of the papacy did arise. And this progress towards a reconciliation is daily improved by the endeavours of some to lessen all the doctrinal differences between the Papists and Protestants, and to make them appear as things not worth the striving or contending about.

The same work is carried on by the labours and endeavours of many in their public writings, to divert the making application of Scripture prophecies and predictions of an apostatical antichristian church-state, unto the church of Rome. The persuasion hereof (as it is a most undoubted truth wherein the souls of men are concerned) is the principal means of preserving the body of the people in an aversa-

tion unto popery. If you can once persuade them, that the pope is not antichrist, that the church of Rome is not that idolatrous tyrannical state foretold in the Scripture, many would be very indifferent how you treat with them, or what composition you shall make for yourselves. But it is hoped, that the broad light which ariseth from the evidence the pope and his church for many ages have given of themselves so to be, by their idolatries, persecutions, murders, Luciferian pride, trampling on the power and persons of kings and all sorts of persons, in conjunction with the characteristical notes of times, places, rise, progress, nature, and actings of that church-state in the Scripture, will not easily be extinguished.

There is no small prevalency in the world of an atheistical principle lately advanced, namely, of resolving all respect unto the public profession of religion into the wills and laws of men in supreme power. It is supposed herein, that men may be in their own minds of what religion they please, and be as religious as they will; but for the preservation of society, it is meet that the wills of lawgivers in all nations should be the sole rule of the outward profession of religion. Now although this atheistical opinion be destructive of Christian religion, condemning all the professors of it from its first entrance into the world of the highest folly imaginable, yet being suited to accommodate all the lusts and interests of men profane and ungodly, it is incredible what a progress in a short time it hath made in the world. And those who have imbibed it are ready for all such compositions in religion, as may be supposed any way commodious unto their inclinations and interests.

I shall only mention that which of all other things is of the worst abode, namely, the loss of the power of religion in all sorts of persons. The Protestant religion will not any where long maintain its station any otherwise, than by an experience of its power and efficacy on the souls of men. Where this is lost through the power of prevalent vicious habits of the minds of men, the whole of that religion will be parted withal at an easy rate. For there is another continually proposed unto them, with those entertainments for men's fancies and carnal affections, with those accommodations for their lusts living and dying, with outward secu-

lar advantages, that this religion is not capable of, nor accompanied withal.

This is that which guided with an eye to outward advancement, hath in the last age lost great numbers of the nobility of France and Poland, and other places, from the profession of the gospel, whose ancestors were renowned champions for the truth of it. For to what end should men entertain a religion which they find no inward spiritual advantage by, and are for the profession of it exposed unto all sorts of outward disadvantages? And this sort of men, will at any time greedily embrace such a reconciliation with the church of Rome, as by the terms of it may a little shelter their reputation, and make a pretence of satisfying some traditional convictions of the truth which they had professed.

Moreover, unless it be diligently watched against, weariness is apt to grow on many of the clergy, of that spiritual rule and conduct of the people, which according to the principles of the Protestant religion, is committed unto them. For there hath by virtue thereof, so much light and knowledge been diffused among the people, and such a valuation of their spiritual liberty thereon, which formerly they knew nothing of, that there is an excellent virtue and piety, with continual care and watchfulness required unto the rule of them; and yet, when the best of men have done their utmost herein also, they will meet with that which shall exercise their wisdom and patience all their days. Neither hath Christ granted any rule or office in his church on any other terms; nor will the state of his subjects, who are all volunteers, permit it to be otherwise. No wonder then if some do like those engines of an easy rule, namely, ignorance and blind devotion in the people, and so are ready to return unto them again. For it is a monstrous wearisome thing for men of heroic governing spirits, to be obliged to give conviction from the Scripture unto such persons as they judge impertinent, of what they do; much more to order their conversation with strictness, that no offence be taken at them. This posture of things men seem to be weary of, and therefore do daily relinquish them, so far as they can pretend any consistency between what they do, and the religion which they profess. But the utter shaking

off of those bonds and manacles, unworthy of men of generous spirits, must needs seem more eligible unto them. And if hereon such terms of reconciliation be offered, as shall not only secure unto them their present possessions and dignities, but give them also a prospect of farther advancement, it is to be feared that many of this sort will judge it better to embrace things so desirable, than to die in a prison, or at a stake.

Besides all these, there is at present a coincidence of two things, that exceedingly incline the minds of many unto an ecclesiastical coalescency with the church of Rome. And these are, first, an ignorance or forgetfulness of what the papacy was, and will again be; and then a sense of some provocations given, or supposed to be given them, by the Protestant religion, or those that profess it. Alas! what harm hath the papacy ever done to them? It may be they can give instances wherein they have had advantage by it, or by them that belong unto it. But every thing which they suppose evil, and find inconvenient unto their present inclinations, they suspect to proceed from the principles of the Protestant religion, from whence they have already received many provocations.

These are some of the reasons which make it evident, that there may be no small danger unto the public profession of the Protestant religion, the thing inquired after, from the present design of not a few, to make a reconciliation of the two religions, and to bring all men into a coalescency in faith, worship, and rule with the church of Rome. Now as there is little hope to prevail with them who are under the power of these things and considerations, or are influenced by them, by arguments religious and rational, seeing they have all of them their foundation in such corrupt affections, inclinations, and interests, as are more deaf than an adder unto such charms; yet, for the sake of others not as yet engaged by such prejudices, I shall manifest in a few instances the folly and wickedness of attempting, or complying with any reconciliation with the church of Rome.

For, in the first place, be it on what terms it will, it is a renunciation of the fundamental principle of the reformation; namely, that the church of Rome is that idolatrous antichristian state which is foretold in the Scriptures. For

if it be so, the persons that belong unto it may be converted, but the state itself is to be destroyed. And to join ourselves unto, or coalesce in, that church-state on any terms whatever, that the Lord Christ hath designed to destruction, is both foolish in itself, and will be ruinous in the issue unto our souls.

For it will hence also follow, that we interest ourselves in the guilt of all that innocent blood which hath been shed by the power of that church-state for a dissent from it. For this guilt, which is next unto that of the church of the Jews in murdering the head of the church, and every way equal unto that of the pagan world in the blood shed in their persecutions, for which it was temporally and eternally destroyed, lies charged on this church-state, and will reach unto all that shall choose an ecclesiastical *conjunction* therein. And let such persons flatter themselves whilst they please, and slight these things, as those wherein they are not concerned, they will find them true to their cost, here or hereafter.

Neither will men of any light or ingenuity easily renounce the whole work of God's grace and power in the reformation, and cast the guilt of all the divisions that have been in the world, on the part of the Protestants. For seeing they have all been on the account of the church-state of Rome, in opposition whereunto the martyrs laid down their lives, a coalescency on any terms in and with that church-state, doth include a condemnation of all that hath been done or suffered in opposition thereunto. The preaching of the gospel hath been but a fancy; the suffering of the martyrs was the highest folly; the glory given to God on these accounts, little less than blasphemy, is the language of such a coalescency.

The vanity also of the terms of reconciliation which are or may be proposed, is obvious unto all that are not wilfully blind. For the church of Rome preserving its essentially constitutive principles, and its being as such, can make no such condescensions, as shall not keep safe and secure the whole malignity of their faith and worship. When any thing that hath the show, or appearance of a concession, as suppose priests' marriage, the cup unto the laity, and the service of the church in a known tongue is proposed, it is natural

for all men to commend and approve of what is so done, because it is a kind of relinquishment of things grievous and tyrannical. At the first proposal few will judge these things to be sufficient, but will encourage themselves in an expectation of farther condescensions; and will be ready to assure others that they will ensue; but yet, when they find themselves defeated herein, they will take up the management of the cause, and contend, that this is enough at present for sober men, seeing no more can be attained. But in reality this reconciliation will prove a total defection from the Protestant religion. For the church of Rome neither will, nor can, part with any thing that shall change its antichristian state and idolatrous worship. The whole of their pretension is but a decoy to get us into their power, where we shall be made to understand both where we are, and where we have been also. And those which shall be most inclinable unto such a reconciliation as is designed, unless they also become flagitious persecutors of those whom they have left, as is the manner of most apostates, will find their former faults called over to the purpose, and such base acknowledgments required of them, as ingenuous persons would rather choose to die than be brought unto. But although universal experience confirms this to be the certain and undoubted issue of a return unto their power, from which men are judged to have broken away unjustly, whatever salvos seem to be provided against it; yet those that cannot think it shall be so with them, but rather that they shall be dearly embraced, and highly promoted, if not for their return, yet for their being early and sedulous therein. But if they find this entertainment with them, who have every thing which they think good, as conscience and religion, and every thing that is really evil, as pride, ambition, and revenge, to oblige them unto the contrary, I shall not be alone in being deceived. But this one consideration is sufficient to cast out all thoughts of any reconciliation with the church of Rome. For although they should never so earnestly desire it, as that which would bring dominion, profit, advantage, and reputation unto them, yet is it not in their power, continuing what they are, to make any such concessions as shall alter their state, or once touch the reasons of the Protestants' de-

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parture from them. And seeing what they suppose they may grant, will not be upon a conviction of truth, that such ought to be, as if before they had been in a mistake, but only to comply with a present exigence for their advantage, it will be recalled whenever they judge it meet to take it away again.

Upon the whole matter, the reconciliation designed on the most plausible terms that have ever yet been proposed, is nothing but a hoodwinked defection to Rome, accumulated with a charge on the consciences of them who shall comply therewith, of the guilt of all the miseries and blood of them by whom it will be refused.

But there are, on the other side, certain considerations that may be laid in the balance against these dangers or the fears of them as unto the event; and I shall briefly mention them also. For,

1. The honour of Christ himself seems to be engaged for the preservation of the light and truth of the gospel where it hath been professed. And so it is undoubtedly, unless the sins and ingratitude of the generality of them by whom it is professed, do require that they be dealt withal in his severity. In that case the glory and honour of Christ are more engaged to remove and take away the blessing of it from any place or people, than to put forth his power for its preservation and continuance. Now although it must be acknowledged, that the sins of these and other Protestant nations, have been of a high provoking nature unto the eyes of his glory; yet it may be hoped that they have not exceeded the bounds of his patience and forbearance. And whether it be so or no, there will be a speedy discovery. For if on the many intimations which he hath given them of his displeasure, his many calls to repentance mixed with threatenings, they will now at last return unto him from the evil of their ways, and make their repentance evident by the fruits of it, he will undoubtedly continue his presence among them and his care over them.

But if notwithstanding all that they hear, and feel, and fear at present, notwithstanding all divine warnings and indications of his displeasure, they will go on frowardly in their own ways, unto the high dishonour of himself and his

gospel, causing his name and ways to be blasphemed among the idolatrous nations, the event must be left in the depths of infinite wisdom with sovereign grace and mercy.

2. Notwithstanding all that profaneness and wickedness of life wherein multitudes are immersed who outwardly profess the Protestant religion, there is a remnant in the nations where it is professed who manifest the power of it in their lives, and glorify Christ by their profession and obedience unto all his commands, walking worthy of the gospel in all holy conversation. Nor are this sort confined to any one party or peculiar way among them, but are found in the whole body or community of the Protestant profession. What influence these have on many accounts into the preservation of the light of the gospel in the places, times, and nations wherein their lot and portion is cast by divine providence, is not here to be declared; the Scripture will give a sufficient account of it.

3. There is evidently at present a spirit of courage and Christian magnanimity come upon many, whose other circumstances render them considerable in the world, to do and suffer whatever they shall lawfully be called unto, for the defence of this Protestant religion. This also is from God; and if his purpose were utterly to ruin that interest, it is more suitable unto former dispensations of his providence in like cases, to send weakness, faintness, cowardice, and despondency into the hearts of those concerned, than to give them a spirit of courage and resolution for their duty. And hereunto also belongs that revival of zeal for their religion and the concernments of it, which hath of late been stirred up even in the body of the people, taking occasion from the opposition made unto it, and the dangers whereunto it hath been reduced. If these things are from God, as they seem to be, they will not be so easily run down as some imagine; for whatever means he will make use of, be they in themselves never so weak and contemptible, they shall be effectual unto the end whereunto they are designed. And therefore there is no small indication in them, that it is in the counsel of the divine will as yet to preserve the profession of the Protestant religion, though it may be sorely shaken.

4. The strange discoveries that have been made of the plots and designs of the enemies of this religion, with the

disappointment of many of them, are also a pledge of the care of God over it. Wise and considering men knew well enough that they were at work with all diligence, craft, and industry, for the accomplishment of what they had long designed, and which for some ages they had been engaged in various contrivances to bring about. But what they saw of the effects of their counsels, they could not remove; and all the specialities of their design were hid from them. The generality of men in the mean time, were in the highest security, some enjoying themselves in the advantages which they hold by the profession of religion, and others altogether regardless of these things. But in this state of things, the providence of God making use of the unparalleled confidence and precipitation of the enemies themselves, by strange and unexpected means, lays open their works of darkness, awakens the nation unto the consideration of its danger, variously disappoints their hellish plots, and puts the minds of multitudes, it may be millions, into a posture of taking care about those concernments of their religion, which they had assuredly been surprised into the loss of, had they continued in the security from which their enemies awakened them. And it may be well supposed, that nothing but sin and the highest ingratitude can divert or stop the progress of those streams of providence, whose springs are undeserved mercy and bounty.

For although the wisdom, justice, and honour of the nation in the actings of the king as supreme, of both houses of parliament, in the judges and their legal administrations, with the piety of the church in the observation of a day of fasting and prayer with respect hereunto, be every day exposed to scorn and contempt in the papers and pamphlets of unknown persons, by decrying the plot, and vilifying the discoveries of it (a practice never allowed, never tolerated in any other well-ordered government, as that which would tend to its dissolution), yet all sober men have sufficient evidence of the hand of God in these things, to make them an argument of his watchful care over the Protestant religion.

And unto all these things we may add, the fatal miscarriages and miserable ends of such apostates from the true religion, as have not been contented to ruin their own souls alone, but have been active and instrumental in their capa-

cities, to draw or drive others into the same perdition. Examples in this kind might be multiplied, sufficient to stop this sort of persons in their career, if an open discovery of the pit whereinto they will precipitate themselves, may have any influence upon them.

Some few things may yet be added concerning the outward means of the preservation of the Protestant religion as unto its public profession (for the thing itself will be preserved in despite of the world), which those concerned therein may do well to apply themselves unto. And I shall only name them at present.

And the first is, fervent prayers to Almighty God, that the princes and potentates of the earth may have light to discern that their principal interest in this world lies in its preservation. And although some reasons that may induce them hereunto, may not seem of force unto them, yet there is one that is uncontrollable. For where the Protestant religion is received, publicly professed, and established by law, it cannot be changed without the extreme havoc and ruin of the greatest and best part of their subjects, in all their temporal concerns. And this there is no doubt but that they are obliged so far as in them lies to prevent, as they will give an account unto God of the trust reposed in them. For as things acquitated in the world, as the designs and interests of the parties at variance are formed, it is a madness to suppose that any alteration can be made herein, without these direful effects; and if they should be covered for a season, they will break forth afterward with more rage and fury. But I refer this unto the wisdom of them that are concerned.

It is also necessary hereunto, that all those who sincerely own this religion, and make it the rule of their living unto God, in hopes of the eternal enjoyment of him in another world, do depose the consideration of the lesser differences amongst themselves, and unite in one common design and interest to oppose the entrances and growth of popery among us. And it is a hard thing to persuade rational men, that they are in earnest for its opposition and exclusion, who are not willing so to do.

But that whereon amongst ourselves the event of this contest doth depend, is the repentance and reformation of

all them that profess this religion, upon the divine calls and warnings which they have received.

For a close of this discourse, if we may suppose what we may justly fear, namely, that the holy God, to punish the horrible sins and ingratitude of the nations professing Protestant religion, should suffer the profession of it by of these means or any other that he shall think meet to n his holy permission, to be extinguished for a season, remove the light of the gospel from these nations, we yet conclude two things:

1. That it shall issue at last in the advantage of the church. Antichrist shall not be a final gainer in this contest; his success herein will be the forerunner of his utter destruction. The healing of his deadly wound will preserve his life but for a little while. Religion shall be again restored in a more refined profession. There shall ensue hereon no new revelations, no new doctrines, no new Scriptures, no new ordinances of worship; the substance of the Protestant doctrine, religion, and worship shall be preserved, restored, beautified in themselves, and in their power, in them by whom they shall be professed: the demonstration whereof shall be given elsewhere.

2. In the mean time, to suffer for it, even unto death, is the most glorious cause wherein we can be engaged, and wherein we shall be undoubtedly victorious. It is no less glorious in the sight of God, no less acceptable with him, to suffer in giving testimony against the abominations of the apostate antichristian church-state, than to suffer for the gospel itself in opposition to idolatrous paganism.

END OF VOL. XVII.

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